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THE  
SCRIPTURES SUFFICIENCY  
TO DETERMINE  
ALL MATTERS OF FAITH,  
MADE GOOD  
*AGAINST THE PAPIST;*  
OR,

That a CHRISTIAN may be infallibly certain of  
his Faith and Religion by the Holy Scriptures.

By that Great and Famous LIGHT of GOD's Church,

WILLIAM TWISSE, D.D. *K*

and PROLOCUTOR of the venerable Assembly of Divines  
AT WESTMINSTER.

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DUMFRIES:

PRINTED BY ROBERT JACKSON.

M,DCC,XCV.





## P R E F A C E.

A SMALL Book ought not to have a large Preface. And a performance of the very illustrious, truly pious, and eminently learned Dr WILLIAM TWISSE, requires no recommendation from my pen. The book, upon perusal, will sufficiently recommend itself unto every intelligent and well-disposed mind. And, beside, it hath prefixed unto it a very large and truly excellent recommendation, by the eminently learned Dr JOSEPH HALL, Bishop of Norwich; which I expect the reader will peruse carefully. Though Bishop Hall differed from Dr Twisse, with regard to church-government, yet he very highly esteemed Dr Twisse, and his writings, as his approbation of this book bears witness.

Dr Twisse, in this excellent small book, clearly proves, that there is a possibility of ascertaining the true meaning of the holy Scriptures, under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, who guideth into all truth. That the holy Scriptures are sufficient, under the blessing of Heaven, to distinguish truth from error. And that a Christian may be infallibly certain of his faith and religion by the holy Scriptures, under divine influence; God being able to instruct us in the meaning of his own word, and to assure us of it. And here the reader is not abused with fiery declamations, nor an empty parade of ungrounded assertions, as in many publications, where we are told, "It is so; it must be so; it cannot be otherwise." But in this very excellent piece, the reader is entertained with deliberate, close, fair, and satisfactory reasoning, clearly grounded upon indisputable premises.

With regard to the reasons for renewing this publication now, they are,

1. Because as it magnifies the intrinsic excellence of the holy Scriptures, so it must be conducive to the declarative glory of their All-sufficient Author. And, therefore, it cannot be unseasonable at any time.

2. Because the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures, which it clearly proves, must be of the greatest importance to mankind, as it is by these we ascertain the knowledge of Christ and eternal life, John v. 39.

3. Because such a publication must be both necessary and seasonable; and, perhaps, advantageous also; when infidelity greatly abounds, as it indisputably doth at this time. And certainly, this piece will either be instrumental, under the influence of Almighty God, in curing some of this generation of their infidelity; or it will be a witness against them on the day of judgment.—See Is. lv. 10, 11.

4. Because the publication of this very valuable piece, may serve to revive the memory of its respectable and renowned author, who seems to be greatly forgot by the men of this generation. And it may serve to preserve a grateful remembrance of his memory, in the minds of the lovers of truth.

5. Because by the publication of this piece, a precious and rare jewel will be recovered from the grave of deep forgetfulness. This piece was become so rare, that I could not procure a copy of it either in London or Edinburgh, by a close continued search.

The public may be assured upon honour, that all care shall be taken to have this entire piece of the illustrious Dr Twisse exactly printed, according to the London-copy printed in the year 1656. There are some Latin phrases, which I have translated for the benefit of the English.

P R E F A C E.

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English reader, where this was omitted, and the sense lost to those who could not read Latin. Where the sense is not affected this is not minded; or where it is given in another place by the author. The English reader, therefore, I hope, will suffer no loss by the Latin phrases he meets here. And as I could not prevail upon myself to make the least alteration in another man's work, so every expression stands in its original form.

And, may the Lord God of salvation, to whom be-  
longeth the issues from death, bless it for the important  
ends for which it is now published. And I remain the  
devoted servant of its friends, and of its Author's me-  
mory, in the cause of God and truth.

JAMES REID.

4th Nov. 1795.

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THE  
A P P R O B A T I O N  
OF

That Reverend FATHER of the CHURCH,  
JOSEPH HALL,  
BISHOP OF NORWICH:

*In a Letter to his worthily respected Friend, Mr W. S.*

WORTHY SIR,

**I** RETURN you many thanks for the favour you have done me, in affording me the view of this solid and reasonable piece of Dr TWISSE, in full answer to this pretended questionist, who, under the colour of a *Perplexing Case of Conscience*, from a preacher of the Gospel, sends forth a foolish kind of challenge to all Protestant divines. Had you not named the author of the satisfactory Answer, and seconded it by another's attestation, I could both have known and avouched him. There is a face of a style, by which we scholars know one another, no less than our persons by a visible countenance: whosoever hath read the witty and acute exercitations of this author upon the writings of Dr Jackson, will easily find him in this tractate both for form and matter. This sculking and disguised challenger could not have met with a meeter combatant; a man so eminent in school-divinity, that the Jesuits have felt, and (for aught I see) shrunk under his strength, in their *Scientia Media*; and whom the states of the Netherlands, out of the fame of his worth, would fain have tempted



tempted away, with large proffers, to a public professorship in one of their universities. I only wish he had met with a more able adversary: for certainly, as I intimated to you in my last, this beagle, whosoever he be, whether out of misprision or craft, hunts counter, and runs all the while upon a wrong ground; vainly supposing, that differences in points not fundamental, make a diversity of religions; and weakly conceiving, that because there are many false claims to truth in the world, God hath not left us means enough in his revealed Will to distinguish truth from error: as if, because there are store of counterfeit coins abroad, it could not be safe for a man to receive, or possible to discern current money: whereas, if his wit would have served him, he might have considered, that all, both *agenda* and *credenda* necessary to salvation, (which only can difference religion,) are clearly laid down in the sacred Oracles of Scripture; with which, if any refractory soul will unjustly quarrel, he may by those helps which God hath left to his church, be either convinced or shamed—In the meanwhile, it is no reason that his absurd obstinacy should cast any blemish upon the clear face of truth, or be any prejudice to others, who are blessed with better apprehensions, whose not forefalled souls, out of that judgment of discretion which God hath endowed all wise Christians withal, upon due search may by those good means which God hath held forth to us, give himself so full satisfaction in all important truths, as wherein he may securely rest, with a resolute defiance of all oppositions.

Had this questionist but consulted with learned Bishop Davenant's irrefragable Discourse, *De judice ac norma fidei*, he had forborne the blurring of his paper, and

spared the labour of this his perplexed and shuffling proposal of his pretendedly-perplexing question, which in very truth is no other than a stale and often exploded cavil, newly furnished over with a false colour of a tenderly conscientious irresolution. The man will find himself here over-answered, and receive too much honour from such an antagonist—in that it may be said of him, *Æneæ magni dextra cadis*; thou fallest by the right-hand of the great Æneas.—Now, since you are pleased to desire my opinion of the whole work; to speak freely—One or two passages I confess to meet with in this learned and weighty discourse, (as concerning the name and number of the Apocalyptical beast, 666,) which do not altogether carry my assent. That mystery must and will lie still close, after all the scanning of the sharpest wits and judgments. But for all the doctrinal points, I cannot but applaud them as worthy of the author, and satisfactory to the reader, and convictive of the adversary. Farewel, from your much devoted,

J. H. B. N.

HIGHAM, APRIL 29, 1652.

S I R,

I HAVE read this learned and satisfactory ANSWER, to the *Perplexing Question and Doubtful Case of Conscience*, in the lifetime of Dr TWISSE; and, if you shall please to give it your *imprimatur*, I think it may be advantageous in this juncture of time. I rest Your's,

MAY 3, 1652.

JA. CRANFORD.

*Imprimatur,*

EDM. CALAMY.

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A

PERPLEXING QUESTION;

OR,

A DOUBTFUL CASE OF

*C O N S C I E N C E,*

OF A CERTAIN

PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

**O**UR religion is our faith ; faith either saves or condemns ; justly ought we therefore to be able to understand and prove our faith.

But now there ariseth a great doubt to me, and other of the simpler sort of Christians, Whether it be possible for us to have an infallible certainty of our faith out of the holy Scriptures, and so consequently rely on and trust to this faith, as to an unshaken foundation ?

The reason of our doubting is this—Both Papists and Calvinists holding contrary opinions, do maintain and prove by the holy Scriptures (as they suppose) the contrary to that which the Lutherans hold ; seriously affirming, that in the Scriptures the Lutheran religion is condemned, and theirs confirmed. Which thing no man will deny to be an evident argument of the obscurity of the holy Scriptures. If there be two physicians of equal learning, and of the same intent in curing the sick, that is, alike desirous to cure the disease ; and if these physicians



cians should out of one and the same book gather, the one, that a fever is cured with wine—and the other, that wine is as bad as poison to them that have the fever; how, I pray, shall we know which of these two to take part withal? A man can gather nothing, but that the remedy for that disease is obscurely expressed in that book.

Some may object—The Sects do not follow the Scriptures only, but they add, the Papists their traditions; the Calvinists their reasons; the Anabaptists their dreams.

I answer—They do so, in those things which are not clearly taught in the holy Scriptures; but in the controversies between them and the Lutherans, they proceed not so; but by Scriptures they fight against Lutheran tenets, which are confirmed by the Scriptures; and endeavour, by the help of the Scriptures, to fight for and defend their own, which the Lutherans by Scriptures do condemn. Nay more, there are some, viz. the Anabaptists, that urge the Scriptures in the very letter more than the rest. The Calvinists use their reason, and out of the Scriptures draw arguments; which thing the Lutherans also do, never suffering any of theirs to reason against the Scriptures.

2. If it be objected unto them, that they wilfully, and against their consciences, do condemn the Lutheran tenets, and confirm their own; they will answer, That this were a very grievous sin, and that men ought not to presume that they would falsify and corrupt the letters and commands of their Lord to his sons and subjects; much less that they do maliciously err, and lead themselves and others into the danger of their salvation: and, to say the truth, it is not likely that so many hundred thousands of men would come to that pitch of malice, though



ough one should, especially seeing they dare confirm  
their honest meaning with an oath; wherefore, unless  
they be convinced of maliciously-wilful error, we shall  
not injuriously to slander them.

It may be objected—Perhaps they be forestalled  
with pre-conceived opinions. I answer—How? You  
say they accustom themselves from their cradles to  
their own religion, forsaking the Bible and other books.  
Answer—This is true in Popery; but not in Calvinists,  
and others, who urge the Bible more than we do.—  
We have more freedom than we have to the other  
religions. Do not the children of the Lutherans also  
accustom themselves to their religion from their childhood?  
Do they learn a Popish or Calvinistical catechism before  
they have learned a Lutheran one? Is not that a man's  
religion to which he accustoms himself? How doth a child,  
or a layman that hath been taught no religion, know  
what is Lutheranism, or Calvinism? Doth he not take  
the religion which is first offered to him? Besides, no  
pre-conceived opinion is so fast rooted, but that it will  
give place to clear demonstrations, which is confessed  
by all. Therefore, we shall never be able to confute  
any religion with the objection of fore-conceived opinions.  
What shall I say more? Do other religions want civil  
learning? There are found amongst them sufficiently  
learned and ingenious men, and oftentimes they have  
much better and fitter means for the advancement of  
learning, than the Lutherans have; especially the Papists,  
who make choice of the best wits, whom they employ in  
learning from their cradles to their full age, in nothing  
but study, meditation, and continual exercises, and  
abundantly supply them with all things which serve,

or seem to serve, for their furthering and forwarding and with all care and diligence do remove and take away whatsoever causeth, or seems to cause, any hindrance of their course. They study the Scriptures and fathers night and day, and refuse no labour in learning the foundation of their own religion, and in knowing and understanding the errors of others. Nay, the method and manner of learning, of comparing the Scriptures, of interpreting according to the *analogi* of faith, of bringing no sense to the Scriptures, and such other rules, cannot be unknown to them.

Obj. But perhaps God hath not granted them his Spirit and his grace.

I answer—God being sought unto and solicited by prayers, denies to no man his grace and Spirit of truth. Now, men of other religions crave of God the enlightening of their mind, and direction in a right way, no less than ourselves; nay (as far as we can discern) perhaps with a greater fervency and zeal; neither are we to think that they ask it out of hypocrisy and with dissimulation and that so they would mock God. Therefore, it is to be taken for granted, that the Spirit is where the fruits of the Spirit are found, of which none ought to boast above others. Nay more, the knowledge of understanding the Scriptures is a peculiar gift of the Spirit, which is granted no less to others than to us. It is true, indeed, that he only understands the Scriptures, who hath the Spirit that dictated them; and (as it is in worldly laws) no doctors interpretation or deciding doth justify till the lawgiver approve that deciding. Yet he that boasteth of such approbation of the Spirit is bound to shew it, unless he will be counted but an ordinary doctor.

Obj. I

. If any should here object, that the Scriptures  
elves bear witness of their own clearness, accord-  
that, *Thy word is a lanthorn to my feet, &c. and*  
*have a more sure word, &c.*

answer—All the commands of God are his word,  
o are all his works which are through his word ;  
is confessed by all, that God sets forth his word by  
e, the creature, signs, wonders, beneath, above, and  
finite ways ; also the Scriptures witness that many  
s neither are nor can be written. Therefore, the  
of his voice is taken diversely in the Scriptures ;  
o by consequence, all that is called God's word is  
necessarily to be understood of the Scriptures. Here-  
add, that at that time many parts of Scripture were  
et written ; wherefore, the evidence of the thing  
estly proveth, that this is not spoken of the whole  
ment and letter of the Scripture, for as much as the  
res of the prophecy of the Apocalypse, and infinite  
r things belonging to the fulfilling of those prophe-  
were hidden from the prophets themselves, and the  
ers, (much more than from others,) and are yet  
den. Christ himself speaks in parables, to the end  
t men may hear with their ears and not understand.  
e Scripture itself, in very many places, witnesseth that  
word of God is secret, obscure, hidden, and discover-  
only to the Spirit, or to the godly only, to whom  
l reveals it ; so that in the Scriptures there are more  
monies of their obscurity, than of their clearness ;  
is not the Scripture hereby either rejected or slight-  
For even before the Law was given and written,  
had a certain light, by the help whereof they might,  
they would, have found out the truth more clearly  
than



than we ; and although in the New Testament a great light be risen, yet must we not think that in the Old Testament there was a mere blindness. Whence we may reason, that God thought it not useful for us to reveal all things to us ; but though all things perhaps are not necessary to be known, yet nevertheless there may be had a certain and infallible way of interpreting, by the help whereof the most, and most necessary controversies may be decided ; of which, if trial be made, a clear light and mere harmony may be shewn, in such Scriptures (according to the opinion of many) are obscure. It is possible also, that there should be not a few other ways of illustrating that which is obscure, although this tried way be not used alone ; for there may both be admitted and used, agreements coming from the same Spirit and word, sometimes where there is no demonstration.

Nor am I moved with that objection, That it is enough for the Lutherans that they are assured of the truth of Lutheranism, though others cannot see and believe for this is not that which I would have. I enquire how a man may be sure not of his own opinion, but of the truth : Now, if I believe and determine that a thing is true, this is my opinion ; yet is it not therefore the truth, seeing truth and opinion have nothing in them alike. A stedfast persuasion changeth not the essence of the thing whereof a man is persuaded : For then many melancholic persons, whose opinions are immovable, work miracles, and make all their conceits essential. The nature of true knowledge is this,—To be desirable, not to me, or some men, but to all, and to

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a consent from any man, as two and three make five.—  
A thing controverted, and which some understand one way, some another, can never make me certain and free from doubt, whether I have the truth or not; and he that knows no other than what he determines, may be excused of malice and hypocrisy. But this reasoning, *I and my follower are sure of this thing, therefore it is true*, is unreasonable reasoning.

Lastly : If we build our religion only upon the Scripture, the learned shall have a great prerogative above the unlearned, in the matter of faith and religion, and shall be more engaged in thankfulness to God than they; and so religion shall favour and cleave to good wits.—  
Also, many have their senses exercised in the Scripture, or are more inventive and ingenious than others; therefore, if a man could by disputing and reasoning confute some theses, and as it were take away a man's opinion from him, and become conqueror, he should also take away his religion; and the other should be constrained either to take up his conqueror's religion, or, against his conscience, to keep his own.

Nor will that answer serve the turn, our divines and pastors can answer you, though I cannot: for then should I believe with another man's faith; but faith must be mine, not another man's, else should salvation also be another man's. If religion be the service of God, surely it is necessary that I understand that service which I must perform to my Lord. Seeing God will not reckon another man's service for mine, and cannot be served by a substitute, it remains that we conclude—Controversies are to be left to learned men, and are not so very necessary.

sary. It may be answered, Then also religion is to be left to learned men ; for controversies are our very religion ; for (saving the consideration of them) there is no difference, but Papists are Protestants, and Protestants are Papists—Look how much a man knows of controversies, so much doth he know of his own religion. The state of a man's salvation is such as his religion and his faith.—Now there is but one salvation, and but one faith. But if controversies belong to the learned only, wherefore have the laymen endured so many afflictions, distresses, nay, and death itself, for those controversies sake ?

I know indeed that a Calvinist doctor, one Dr Bergius, a preacher at Bremen, affirms in his late published Sermons, that controversies are not merely necessary to salvation ; that the Scripture is plain and clear in those things which are necessary to salvation, and that there was never any contrariety between the religions themselves. At which also the Leiplich Collation between the Lutherans and Calvinists seems to aim.

This I am persuaded is very true, that had the Holy Ghost judged those controverted questions necessary to salvation, it would have expressed and propounded them in the holy Scripture clearly and plainly, seeing those epistles were sent to simple, and lay men especially. Nor doth it seem likely to be true, that ever there were so many Articles of Faith drawn out of them, as are now to be read in the Catechisms, Common-places, and Compendis of Divines. As yet there is no certain number of them determined, seeing some Divines have propounded more, and some fewer ; and some religions have, in process of time, either added or abated whole Articles, and

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After many miseries endured for the defence of some of them, entering a way of moderation, they have determined that for tolerable and indifferent, which before they thought damnable. But, howsoever, there are so many of them, that a man may deservedly call in question the precise necessity of them: and this seems the best solution to disintangle and appease perplexed, doubtful, and erring consciences.

But could so many thousand Divines of former ages be ignorant of this? Have there not so many wars been undertaken for this cause? Could those learned men suffer so many thousands of men to run headlong, both by doing and suffering, into the hazard of soul and body for religion's sake? and so many unspeakable mischiefs to arise, when as it is possible for a man to be saved without the controversies of religion? But if this be the command of God, under pain of temporal and everlasting punishment, to fight for those controversies, how can we excuse those shuffling agreements of faith, religion, and God's worship? A servant may not abate any thing of his Lord's due.

Let this thing be considered, seeing it is so intricate, and leads me and many others into Disquiet of mind; for which perplexities of conscience, none will deny that a remedy is to be sought at the hands of those that have Christian fellow-feeling, and might be found, if all the Divines of those sides that have left Popery, would vouchsafe to afford me a wise, mild, and solid answer in writing, not favouring of partiality, prejudice, or passion.



[*This JESUITICAL QUESTION was sent out of Germany, when the ASSEMBLY of DIVINES were sitting at WESTMINSTER, and was translated out of HIGH-DUTCH.*]

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THE  
DOUBTING CONSCIENCE

RESOLVED,

IN ANSWER TO A (PRETENDED)

PERPLEXING QUESTION.

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CONSIDERATION.

IT is an old saying, that *Universus Mundus exercet histrioniam*; the whole world act like trifling stage-players; but I think never more verified in any age than in this. There was a time when the Devil played his part, in the shape of a dragon, with seven heads and ten horns; Rev. xii. 3, 7, 9. But after the war in heaven, between Michael and his angels on the one side, and the dragon and his angels on the other, the dragon was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. But he continued to play the part of an old serpent still, which deceiveth the whole world by his cunning craftiness; *Adversarius qui in virtutis inefficax persecutionibus tecta nocendi arte perficit*; \* and no marvel if intelligent spirits are very subdolous and full of craft; *Eum nimis*

B 2

*astutum*

\* Léo Serm. 6. de Epiphani.

*astutum fecit tam natura subtilis, quam longa-exercitatio malitiæ ejus ; for both the Devil's subtile nature, and his long practice, render him exceeding crafty.*† And afterwards, he found as powerful means to do mischief to the church of God, *gladio oris*, by the sword of the mouth, as formerly he had done *ore gladii*, by the mouth or edge of the sword, even by another beast who had two horns like the Lamb, Rev. xiii. 11, 13. but spake like the dragon. And this beast first was operative by deceit ; for he did great wonders, so that he made fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceived them that dwelt on earth by the means of his miracles. This is that man of sin St Paul speaks of, whose coming was in the effectual power of Satan, in signs and lying wonders, and in all deceiveableness of unrighteousness, 2 Theff. ii. 9, 10. and by his cunning practices got at length as many heads to his body, and horns to his head, as the dragon had, and got him a mistress too like himself, the whore of Babylon, whom John saw, Rev. xvii. 6. drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus : witness the slaughters made, and barbarous outrages committed upon the Waldenses, who first proclaimed to the world that Rome was the whore of Babylon, and the Pope antichrist. But, in these latter days, the Lord hath blasted that man of sin with the breath of his mouth, and

broken

† Bernard in Quadrage Sermon. 5.

broken off many horns of the beast, which hath provoked those antichristian generations to a very high degree, Rev. xii.—and the devil undoubtedly hath now greater wrath than ever, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Now, of late years, his greatest proctors, the Jesuits, have not spared to profess despair of prevailing in their cause by disputation, as appears by Weston's Preface to his book, *De triplici hominis statu*. The Gordian knot of controversies in religion must be cut asunder by some Alexander's sword.—Belike this sect was privy to some intentions on foot, for the raising of such meteors as at length have broken forth into those storms which since have exercised all Germany, if not all Christendom, in the West: And I have read a discourse written by one who was sometimes secretary to the Pope, discovering the practices of those times, and relating a council for the propagating of religion, erected and instituted by Glemens Octavus, that whining Pope; thereby concealing the bloody and barbarous intention of his heart: some say, that for all his whining he was as impure as bloody. Now these courses, wherewith they travelled many years, being now brought forth unto the light, I wonder not a little that they persist in their motive learning, which of all others is of the basest alloy, and hath more of the nature of a charm than of a medicine, to cure error in a rational way. For I cannot be persuaded otherwise, but that some vile Jesuit

B 3

hath



hath an hand in this argument, to style himself a preacher of the gospel; for though he holds the Pope to be judge of controversies, yet I presume when he preacheth, he doth not take his text out of the Pope's canons, but out of the word of God—And we know there are Dutch Jesuits, as well as Spanish Jesuits; and I have heard, that when the Arminian quarrels were rise in the Netherlands, some Jesuits have insinuated themselves amongst them, and preached in their congregations, to promote the Arminian cause, though not known to be any other than their own ministers.

This preacher of the gospel shapes his discourse at pleasure, calling it *A Perplexing Question*; or, *A Doubtful Case of Conscience*;—whereas, it contains nothing but a thread-bare and old worn-out argument—He was ashamed to say that it proceeds concerning the Scripture, lest the conscience of every sober Christian should rise against it; therefore, he baulks that, and shapes it to proceed concerning the foundation of the religion of the Protestants, and others who have made a separation from the Pope. Now, this foundation is no other than the Scripture of the prophets and apostles, which St Paul calls the foundation whereupon the church is built. And the *Perplexing Question*, and *Doubtful Case of Conscience*, comes to this, *Whether the Scripture or the Pope be the foundation whereupon the church is built?* I do not well understand, what he means by distinguishing those who have made a separation

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their error to this their ignorance, and shewing how little need there is that any man should rise from the dead to tell men of that place of torment, in case they have Moses and the prophets; and that whoso will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though a man rise from the dead, Luke xvi.—and counselling the Jews to search the Scriptures, John v.—and justifying them in their opinion, thinking them to be sufficient to direct them unto everlasting life. Afterwards, the apostles submitted their doctrine to be examined by the word of God. The Bereans being commended for this, Acts vii. and professing that the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. iii. 15. After the ancient fathers have called the trial of controversies to the word of God; and Constantine, at the council of Nice, referred all the bishops there assembled to proceed according to this; and both Chrysostome and Austin have professed, that all things necessary to salvation are clearly set down in Scripture; and in the controversy between Hierome and Austin about Paul's reproving Peter, whether it were done seriously, or in pretence only, Hierome pleading variety of fathers for his way, and Austin opposing the clear evidence of the text against them all. And Papists themselves, many of the more ingenious sort of them, having been found to confess, that the last resolution of our faith ought to be made into the word of God; and

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the contradictory nature of the Popish tenet in proving the true church by the Scriptures, and the Scriptures by the church, having been made manifest to the world by divines. After all this, I say, that a preacher of the gospel should be brought upon the stage to propose such a question, as, *Whether any Christian can be certain of his faith by the holy Scriptures*; nor propose it only, but to call it *A Perplexed Question*, and *A Doubtful Case of Conscience*, is so unbecomingly a course, as, in my judgment, it becomes none but such an one as hath a whore's forehead, and cannot be ashamed.

Yet I consider the condition of these present times in Germany, where the antichristian congregations have confederated themselves, and taken counsel against God's secretaries; and as Pharaoh pursued the Israelites, thinking to overtake them, and that their lust should be satisfied upon them; so these have not only thought so, but done so; it is not impossible but that some weak preacher of the gospel may fall into their hands, and be so charmed with fears, or hopes, or both, as to be drawn into their lure, and brought to do them this piece of service, as to propose such a question, and name the child after this manner: (For these times are the very hour and power of darkness, and Satan is not yet bound, though we trust his binding is not far off.) And it is not strange that men should be given over to believe lies, and to become some Jesuit's proctor, calling men to relieve a scrupulous and perplexed

plexed conscience, and to intreat all Christians, (especially the Calvinist divines and preachers,) with all due respect, to give a solution to this proposed question, and this in Dutch; whereas I thought that this question had neither being, life or motion, in any other part of the Christian world, but only in this our England.—Well, let us consider wherein the perplexity of this question consists, or what it is that makes it.

*Disc.* *Our religion is our faith; faith either saves or condemns; justly ought we therefore to be able to understand and prove our faith.*

*Confid.* The first proposition, That our religion is our faith, is brought in to no purpose; the argument here used subsists well enough without it, such as it is. The faith that saves is an act in man; but that which is to be proved is no act in man, but the object of that act, the thing believed. What conscience the author of this discourse had I know not; but I doubt he will appear to be but of little wit.

*Disc.* *But now there ariseth a great doubt to me, and others of the simpler sort of Christians, Whether it be possible for us to have an infallible certainty of our faith out of the holy Scriptures, and so consequently to rely on and trust to this faith, as to an unshaken foundation.*

*Confid.* Let my faith be never so certain, and my repentance and good works never so sincere, I trust neither to the one nor to the other;—Christ is the rock and foundation whereupon

whereupon God's church is built; upon which we are built by the knowledge of Christ, and faith in Christ; and, in him alone, I trust both for the keeping of me in this knowledge, and faith of Christ, and for the bringing of me thereby unto salvation, as Paul saith, 1 Cor. i. 20. "I know whom I have trusted, and I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." And 1 Cor. i. 30. "God hath made him unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Whoso doubts whether it be possible to have any certainty of faith out of the holy Scriptures, I demand of him, whether he doubts of the possibility for a man to have any certain faith at all; or no; if he doubts whether this be possible, who seeth not that it is more fit this question should be proposed in the first place, and upon the solution thereof, and not afore, to proceed to inquire by what this certainty may be had; if he doubts not but that this is possible, let him shew us how or by what means he is assured hereof, as namely, whether by natural reason, or by the word of the Pope, or by the word of an angel. And indeed, if the question were proposed indifferently and fairly with distinction, we should soon perceive how little cause there is to call this a *Perplexed Question*, or a *Doubtful Case of Conscience*, though these forms favour of no learning, nor judgment; for the perplexity that is found in this argument is not in the question; if it be, it is the mere fault of the propounder exhibiting



hibiting it in perplexed terms, the meaning whereof cannot be easily unfolded; but rather in finding out the truth thereof, and that is only in case the reasons be of equal moment on both sides, wherewith the truth is incumbered; so that the light and convincing evidence thereof cannot easily break forth and appear. Then as for a case of conscience, that is a very alien notion, and ill applied in this place: for cases of conscience are only touching what we ought to do in a certain case; but this is only touching possibility of assurance, as, Whether we can have any certain faith by the holy Scriptures. But let us proceed distinctly; and,

1. Let us inquire, Whether a man can have any certain faith at all?—I answer, 1st, They may; for many have had it, as it is defined by St Paul, Heb. xi. to be the evidence of things not seen, the ground of things hoped for; and there the apostle reckons up a catalogue of many that had such a faith. I presume the propounder of this, if he be a Christian, makes no question hereof; and that Abraham, the father of the faithful, Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20. was such a one, who against hope believed in hope, and being not weak in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and that all the true children of Abraham have the like faith as Abraham had. 2d, But then let us distinguish when we treat of possibility; this may be understood either  
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in reference to the power of nature, or in respect of the power of God: and according to this distinction I answer, that it is utterly impossible to believe this by the power of nature, Matt. xvi. 17. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man perceives not the things of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of God been revealed?" And John xii. 39. "Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias saith again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." And Rom. viii. 8. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God;" and consequently, they cannot have faith; for surely by faith we please God. But then, on the other side, it is most true, that by the power of God a man may believe, Acts xviii. 27. "They believed through grace." And Phil. i. 29. "To you it is given not only to believe in him, but to suffer for him." And to believe and find mercy at God's hands are all one, Rom. xi. 30.

Now, if it be granted that faith may be had in what degree of certainty soever, what sober Christian can make doubt, but that if question be made about the means whereby we may have

have it, it may be had by holy Scripture as well as by any other means? yea, and far better, considering that faith is, in the proper notion thereof, the assent to somewhat from the authority of the speaker; and if the speaker is but a man, it is no better than faith human; if the speaker be God, that, and that alone, makes it to be faith divine. Now we all confess, that the holy Scripture is the word of God; and, therefore, if by any word faith may be had in what degree of certainty soever, sure it may be had by the word of God; yea, and that no other way can divine faith be had but by the word of God; not by the word of the creature, whether man or angel. And, if faith may be wrought by the power of God's Spirit in the heart of any man, he that makes question whether this may be done by the holy Scriptures, had need of some good measure of hellebore to purge his brain, for he seems to me to be in the next degree to a madman: for seeing faith is no faith, unless it depend upon some word, that God should work his faith by another word than his own, is as uncouth and contradictory an assertion, I should think, as ever was heard among the learned. But it may be this author, through the confusion of his wits, hath not hitherto been so happy as to deliver himself fairly of his own meaning: therefore, let us take notice of the discourse itself, whether it may bear any better state of the question than yet we have been acquainted with—For I guess that,



that, in the issue, the state of the question will come to this,

Whether it be possible for us by the holy Scripture, to have any certain assurance of the meaning of it.

*Disc.* The reason of our doubting is this—Both Papists and Calvinists holding contrary opinions, do maintain and prove by the holy Scriptures (as they suppose) the contrary to that which the Lutherans hold; seriously affirming, that in the Scriptures the Lutheran religion is condemned, and theirs confirmed. Which thing no man will deny to be an evident argument of the obscurity of the holy Scriptures.—If there be two physicians of equal learning, and of the same intent in curing the sick, that is, alike desirous to cure the disease; and if these physicians should out of one and the same book gather, the one, that a fever is cured with wine—and, the other, that wine is as bad as poison to them that have the fever; how, I pray, shall we know which of these two to take part withal?—A man can gather nothing, but that the remedy for that disease is obscurely expressed in that book.

*Confid.* The sum of all this is, that the Scripture is obscure; and that which the author would infer from hence is this—Therefore it is impossible to be sure of the meaning of it; whereby, now I perceive, the *Perplexed Question and Doubtful Case of Conscience* comes but to this in plain terms, Whether it be possible for a man to be sure of the meaning of Scripture: the author maintains the negative, and proves it, because the Scripture is obscure; and

and the obscurity of Scripture he proves by this, that men differ in the exposition of it. Now this I will examine in order, and first observe the dodging disposition of this author, and manifest evidence of his corrupt affection, and that he comes to this work with an intention not to seek the truth, but to circumvent it rather: For whereas the force of his argument to prove that the Scripture is obscure, is but this, that divines differ in the interpretation of Scripture;—yet it served his turn rather to instance in Papists and Calvinists joining together, in the interpretation of Scripture, contrary to the Lutherans. Might he not as well give instance in Papists and Lutherans holding together, in the interpretation of Scripture, contrary to the Calvinists? Might he not as well have instanced in Lutherans and Calvinists joining together, in the interpretation of Scripture, contrary to the Papists?—Undoubtedly he might! for it is but an indefinite proposition, and the matter is clearly contingent. Now an indefinite proposition, in a contingent matter, is confessed in schools to have no greater force than of a particular proposition: as much as to say, they differ one from another in the interpretation of some Scriptures. Now this may very well be true, not only of Papists differing from Protestants, but of Papists differing from Papists, (as Maldonate from Janfenius,) and Protestants from Protestants; not only Lutherans from Calvinists, but one Lutheran from another, and one Calvinist

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Calvinist from another, in the interpretation of some places of Scripture. Nay, doth not one rather differ from another after this very manner? And do not modern divines, even Papists as well as Protestants, take liberty of dissenting from all the ancients, in the interpretation of some places of Scripture? Witness Maldonate in the interpretation of that, Matt. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," who takes a way of interpretation different from all the ancients, by his own confession. And Cardinal Cajetan, when he was put upon the studying of Scripture, by occasion of his conference with Martin Luther, who would hear nothing but Scripture, see what a profession he makes in his entrance upon writing commentaries on the Scriptures; *Si quando occurrerit novus sensus textui consonus, nec a sacra Scriptura, nec ab Ecclesiæ doctrina dissonus, quamvis a torrente doctorum sacrorum alienum, æquos se præbeant censores.* And when Austin takes notice of the multiplicity of translations of the Scripture, he was so far from being offended thereat, that he professed there was more profit than damage redounding thereby to the church; and why may it not be so by different interpretations also? it being more easy to judge which of them is the right, or by refuting them all to find out the true interpretation, than at the first dash to find out the true meaning.

2. Observe the absurd and malicious carriage of this author; 1st, In shaping different religions, according to different interpretations

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of Scriptures ; whereas I have shewn, that the force of the proposition is only a particular, namely, that they differ in the interpretation of some places of Scripture, which difference I have shewn may be found, and ever hath been found, more or less, even amongst them that are of the same religion ; as amongst none have been more different interpretations of Scripture found, than amongst the ancients : yet what Christian is found to be so impudent and immodest, as to lay to their charge that they differed in religion ; and look how many different interpretations of Scripture were found amongst them, so many different religions there were amongst them—He might as well profess, that the Papists amongst themselves, the Lutherans amongst themselves, and the Calvinists amongst themselves, are of different religions.

3. We acknowledge different opinions between Lutherans and Calvinists ; so no doubt, there are different opinions among the Lutherans themselves, and the Calvinists themselves ; but we utterly deny there are different religions. The Lutherans we hold to be true churches, agreeing with us in the fundamental points of faith, and likewise in being free from idolatry ; for albeit they have images in their churches, which we conceive to be a very dangerous thing, yet they do not worship them ; and although they hold real Presence in the Sacrament, yet they do not adore it.

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So that albeit we think some of their opinions are contrary to the Scripture, and they think the like of some of ours, yet neither we any of their religion, nor they of ours I trow, say that it is contrary to the Scripture, much less that it is condemned in Scripture.

But come we to the main scope of this author's discourse, which is to prove that the Scriptures are obscure, and from thence to infer, that we can have no assurance of the true meaning of it. To this we answer,

1. By denying the consequence, which is this—Divines differ in the interpretation of Scripture; therefore, the Scripture is obscure.

And I prove the absurdity, and untruth, and weakness of it.

1. It is weak; for at the uttermost it proves that it is obscure but in some places: for this difference of interpretation is but of some places, as I have shewn; and the force of the proposition I have shewn to be no greater than the force of a particular.

2. It is absurd; for by the same reason may prove that the Scripture is clear, thus:—That Scripture is clear in the interpretation, wherein men of different opinions and different religions do agree; but men of different opinions and religions do agree in the interpretation of divine Scripture; therefore, the divine Scripture is clear; and, indeed, it will be found that we agree in the interpretation not of some only, but of many places of holy scripture. Now what absurd a course is it

for a disputant so to dispute, as that his argument may be retorted with as good force against him; yea, and much more? For when men of different opinions are found to differ about the interpretation of a Scripture, it may be that it ariseth from the love of their own opinion, which makes the Scripture seem to sound the same way; but when they agree in the interpretation of Scripture, notwithstanding the other differences, this argues the Scripture to be clear enough. Nay, we know Bellarmine will dislike an opinion, and Maldonate an interpretation of Scripture, for Calvin's sake, striving to differ from such as they hate, though without all just cause, and to wrest the Scriptures to serve their turns.

3. Lastly; the consequence is as untrue, it is weak and absurd; for the cause of the difference may be in the darkness of their understanding, who take upon them to interpret it, rather than in the darkness of the Scripture itself; which, whether we consider the Law or the Gospel, each of them is termed light by the Spirit of God. "Thy law is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths," said David, Ps. cxix. And of the Gospel our Saviour speaks, "Light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19.—the greater will be their condemnation.

And as for the instance proposed to prove the consequence, of two physicians, 1. The particular proposed is most inficit, and a mere fiction without all colour.

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2. Yet I doubt not but Galen and Hippocrates, in divers places, may admit different interpretations: Therefore I answer,

1. This also may arise not so much from the obscurity of the text, as from the fault of the interpreter.

2. It is a most alien course, to compare the word of God and the word of man together; for man may contradict himself; God cannot: man may forget one time what he delivered at another; God cannot.

3. There is a vast difference between the things of men and the things of God; so that whereas natural reason, and natural instruction, may be sufficient to enable a man to understand the writings of another man; yet only supernatural illumination is sufficient to enable a man to discern the things of God:—yet, I confess, on this particular some judicious reader may think to find a flaw; yet, I presume, that upon serious consideration that attempt will prove but vain, and none but a Socinian will oppose in this, who denies all *fides* *invisita*, and acknowledgeth none but *acquisita*, with natural; and shrewd suspicions that way are betrayed by Mr Chillingworth, as if he acknowledged no faith, but faith natural.

2. But be it granted that the Scripture is obscure: 1. Consider the force of this proposition; it is but an indefinite; and the matter apparently contingent; for, undoubtedly, it is at the good pleasure of God to speak after that manner he thought good. Hence it fol-

loweth, that the force hereof is but the force of a particular proposition; as much as to say that the Scripture in some places is obscure or some places of Scripture are obscure. And indeed, Gregory of old hath professed, that the holy Scripture is like unto a ford, wherein a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim; and, before him, St Paul tells us, that it contains both milk for babes, and strong meat for men; there is enough, and that plain enough to satisfy the hungry; and there is also enough and that obscure enough, to prevent non-sealing, especially in the prophecies for the time to come. The first promise of the covenant of grace was this, "the seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." Here is a double mystery in general notions carried; the one the mystery of Christ's person expressed by the seed of the woman, but implied to be something more, yea much more, even such a one as should break the serpent's head; the other the mystery of his office, carried only in the general notion of breaking the serpent's head. In this time of grace, we know this to have been brought to pass by his dying for our sin and his rising again for our justification. Had this been known to Satan, as now it is to us, is it credible that he would have persuaded Judas, as he did, to contract with the high priests to betray him into their hands? that were Judas-like, after he had betrayed his Master to go forth and hang himself: for we know, that upon the cross he spoiled principalities

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palities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, and triumphed over them. The day of Christ's resurrection, undoubtedly, was a day of extreme confusion to the devil, and all his angels of darkness—So the Jews, had they known this mystery of his person, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. ii. 8.—"but this wisdom of God in a mystery was hid from them," 1 Cor. ii. 7.—and "because they knew him not, nor the words of the prophets which were read every sabbath-day, they fulfilled them in condemning him," Acts xiii. 27. But if all things necessary to salvation are plainly set down in holy Scripture, as both Chrysostome, a Greek father, and Austin, a Latin father, have concurrently delivered, what are we the worse for the obscurity of the same? 2. But suppose all were obscure, yet are there not degrees of obscurity? Amongst writers in all languages there is this difference—some write more obscurely, some more clearly; as amongst the Greeks, what difference between Chrysostome and Epiphanius this way?—among the Latins, between Tertullian and Cyprian? Yet who doubts but even Tertullian may be understood, and that by Cyprian, who was wont to call for him in these terms, *Da mihi magistrum; give me the teacher*; so amongst school divines, Aquinas and Durand are perspicuous and clear; not so with Scot or Cajetan; so Alvares fair and clear, *Navarrettus a Dominicante*, but all along labours of obscurity as a man doth of the gout; whether



ther he understood himself or no, I know not; sure I am he torments his reader; yet by pains and intention of study the difficulty may be overcome, as I have found in part; but I do not think any knowledge in him worthy to be redeemed with the like labour: never any thing tormented me more, unless it were the construing of Dr Jackson's English, yet no where else that I know save in treating of the Divine Essence, Prov. xiv. 16. Now the word of God hath taught us, that knowledge is easy to him that will understand. "If thou callest after knowledge, and criest for understanding: If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5.—especially as touching all things necessary unto salvation.

2. But suppose it were very obscure throughout, is not God the author able to instruct us in his own meaning, and make us assured of it? And hath not our Saviour assured us, that "if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The holy apostle teacheth us this saying, 1 John ii. 27. "That anointing him which ye received of him dwelleth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but, as the same anointing teacheth you all things."

Hereupon Nider, a Papist, in his *Consolatorium timoratae Conscientiæ*, acknowledgeth, that every child of God hath the direction of the Spirit

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Spirit, to lead him into all truth necessary to salvation. And certainly the truth of God's word is infallible, *Cui non potest subesse falsum*. As for the certainty *ex parte Scientis*, 1. That God can work in such a measure as he pleaseth. 2. Yet we know in the best there is the flesh lusting against the spirit, and that sways to infidelity, but the better part masters it. 3. And as for doubting, that is rather on the part of *fiducia*, than of *fides*, and those doubts are mastered, and that is the best faith that masters doubts, and overcometh tentations.

Thus, I presume, the sober reader may observe the rotten condition of this discourse throughout; yet we have spoken nothing of the Scripture, in comparison to other means of assurance which this author subdolously, or simply conceals; because to leave Scripture, and to seek forth for assurance elsewhere, he perceives that this would manifestly appear in the end, to be no better than to leave "the Fountain of living water, and to dig unto ourselves pits, even broken pits that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13. For consider, shall we fly to the voice of the church?—Consider—the voice of God is the voice of the church, and more. 1. It is the voice of the church, yea, of the best church, and purest church, namely, the voice of the prophetic and apostolical church. For *Deus loquitur per prophetas et apostolos*; *God speaks by the prophets and apostles*.—And this is that church into whose voice the last resolution of our faith ought to be made,  
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in the opinion of Durand ; then it is more than the voice of the church, for “ holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 21. You will say, but all the question is about the meaning of it.

I answer, 1. May there not be as much question about the meaning of the voice of the church, as about the meaning of God’s word ? Where doth the church speak more authentically than in general councils ? See the council of Trent,\* the Pope was unwilling to confirm it, till Cardinal Bon Compagio, Bishop of Beatrice, urged him thereunto upon this ground,—That withal he should publish an EDICT, forbidding all men to take upon them the interpretation thereof, and commanding them to seek that from him ; and then, saith he, let us alone to devise a convenient interpretation of it, without prejudice to the advantages of the court of Rome.

2. Again ;—general councils may err, as Austin observes ; the former have been corrected by the latter in some things.

3. Such councils never went about to write commentaries upon the Scripture ; and, if they should, Cajetan confesseth that an interpretation may be given congruous to the text, yet different from the torrent of doctors, notwithstanding which we ought to receive it.

4. Lastly ; after what sense soever I interpret Scripture in any argument, if I am not able to make it good by convincing arguments

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\* History of the Council of Trent.



to every sober conscience, let my proofs be rejected; but withal let him look to it after what manner he resists the evidence brought, as he will answer for it at the day of judgment, according to that of our Saviour, John xii. 48. "He that refuseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him at the last day."

1. It were easy to produce variety of testimonies, even of Papists, acknowledging the last resolution of our faith ought to be made into the word of God, and that the true church, and the power which it hath, is not known but by the word of God.

2. Or will they say the Pope is to resolve us as touching the meaning of Scripture.—To this I answer, 1. That I care not who interprets Scripture to me, so he perform the part of an interpreter indeed, and make it appear to be the meaning of it. 2. And if I do not so, I am content to suffer the loss of that argument, whatever it be.

3. Then it hath been a very rare thing for Popes to set themselves to interpret Scripture. 4. It is well known that Liberius, Pope of Rome, subscribed to Arianism; Honorius was a Monotholite; Pope John XXII. denied that the souls of men lived after separation from the body, (like to the Socinians of these days,) whose opinion was cried down at Paris, and openly proclaimed heretical by the sound of a trumpet.

4. Or shall the rule of interpretation of Scripture be the congruity of it to natural reason, as the Socinians make it? This is most shameful and unreasonable, considering, 1. That our natural reason is much corrupt by the sin of Adam: "The things of God seem foolishness to the natural man," 1 Cor. ii. 14. Naturally we are all darkness. 2. In the state of innocency, do we think that Adam by natural reason was able to find out, or justify, the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Deity? We say God may be known by the light of nature, *quod attinet ad Unitatem naturæ*; with regard to the Unity of nature; but not known *quod attinet ad Trinitatem Personarum*; with respect to the Trinity of Persons. "God hath set the world in man's heart," saith Solomon, "yet can he not find out the works that he hath wrought from the beginning to the end," Eccles. iii. 11.—and if he cannot find out the works of God, is he able to find out the nature of God himself? We know he is said to dwell in a dark cloud.

Disc. Obj. *Some may object—The Sects do not follow the Scriptures only, but they add, the Papists their traditions; the Calvinists their reasons; the Anabaptists their dreams.*

I answer: They do so, in those things which are not clearly taught in the holy Scriptures; but, in the controversies between them and Lutherans, they proceed not so, but by Scriptures fight against Lutheran tenets, which are confirmed by the Scriptures, and endeavour, by

by the help of the Scriptures, to fight for and defend their own, which the Lutherans by Scriptures do condemn. Nay more, there are some, viz, the Anabaptists, that urge the Scriptures in the very letter more than the rest. The Calvinists use their reasons, and out of the Scriptures draw arguments, which thing the Lutherans also do, never suffering any of theirs to reason against the Scriptures.

*Confid.* This author will have the making of his own bed, and shapen his reader at the first encounter to yield, acknowledging the uncontradictable nature of his former one only argument, which yet I have shewn to be both very weak, very ridiculous, and very untrue. But we keep our ground, professing to the world, that the Scriptures alone being the word of God, are the rule of our faith, and no word of man: Papists add traditions, which yet they account the word of God unwritten: we abhor to make any thing the rule of our faith but the written word of God. It is falsely said, that Calvinists add their reasons; they rather suppose reason than add it; the word of God being given to none but reasonable creatures. Neither do we make this reason of ours a rule of faith added to God's word; but it is that light which God hath given us wherewith to search into the meaning of his word, and by studious inquisition and observation to discover it, and make it known to others, and by good reason out of the text to convict others of the truth. And doth this author's reason

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go to bed, and sleep, when he comes to read and studiously to consider the word of God? If it doth, he will prove no better than a drowsy student; and I know no reason but such a one may be in love with dreams as well as Anabaptists.

1. In his answer he carrieth himself most absurdly and ridiculously. For, 1. Most insipidly he supposeth, that the controversies amongst Protestant divines are about such things as are clearly taught in Scripture, as if they agreed in those things which are not clearly set down in Scripture, and differ only about things which are clearly delivered there.

2. He supposeth that Calvinists do not use reason in the controversies between them and the Lutherans, but only in other things,—which is most untrue, and absurd withal; for controversies cannot possibly be managed without reason, both as touching the proof of their own tenet, and touching the disproof of the tenet opposite: And this must needs be the guise of the Lutherans also.

It is false which he saith of Anabaptists, that they urge the very letter of Scriptures more than the rest. For both Calvinists and Lutherans insist wholly upon the literal sense of Scripture, and more than the Anabaptists, in case they (as formerly by this author said) did depend in dreams; for so do not Protestants, but on Scripture only, and that according unto sense literal, not at all according to sense mystical, save only in case the sense mystical be expounded

expounded by some apostle, and thereby made literal. 2. But herein this author's ignorance discovers itself, that he confounds sense literal with the proper sense of the words. We acknowledge sense literal to comprehend sense metaphorical, as well as proper, and to stand in contradiction only to sense mystical: but in case we take that in a metaphorical sense, which our adversaries in any point take in a sense proper, if we do not prove the sense wherein we take it, and disprove theirs by convincing arguments, we will allow the liberty to reject our tenet, and follow their own; for we desire to make our faith evident to the consciences of all opposites; and if they can make their tenets in like manner evident to us, we will renounce our own, and embrace theirs. 3. And this author speaks at random, and he knows not what, when he would have his reader believe the Calvinists permit any to reason against the Scriptures; for by reason to clear the meaning of Scripture, is not, I trust, to reason against it, but for it rather; especially considering, that by reason of Scripture only we dispute the meaning of any place.

Disc. Obj. 2. *If it be objected unto them, that they wilfully, and against their consciences, do condemn the Lutheran tenets, and confirm their own; they will answer,*

Ans. *That this were a very grievous sin, and that men ought not to presume that they would falsify and corrupt the letters and commands of their Lord to his sons and subjects; much less that they*  
do

*do maliciously err, and lead themselves and others into the danger of their salvation: and, to say the truth, it is not likely that so many hundred thousands of men would come to that pitch of malice, though one should, especially seeing they dare confirm their honest meaning with an oath; wherefore, unless they be convicted of maliciously-wilful error, we shall seem injuriously to slander them.*

*Consid.* I see no reason why such a censure should be passed upon the Calvinists, more than upon the Lutherans; more speciously it should be passed by them that are orthodox, upon them that are not; though I justify not this censure whosoever makes it; and certainly there is no just cause to pass it upon them who are in the right; and charity will forbid us rashly to pass this censure upon them who are in the wrong. And as I find defect of love in them who pass such censures hand over head upon their opposites; so I find want of judgment in this author, who puts it upon a man's oath to clear himself of going against his conscience in the tenets he maintaineth; for he that saith a thing against his conscience, is next door by to the swearing of it. But these are such idle and addle conceits, that it causeth no small indignation in me to waste precious time in them, which might be better spent on worthier subjects.

*Disc. Obj. 3.* *It may be objected—Perhaps they be forestalled with pre-conceived opinions.*

*Ans.* *I answer—How? You will say they accustom themselves from their cradles to their own religion,*



religion, forsaking the Bible and other books.—  
I answer—This is true in Popery; but not in Calvinists, and others, who urge the Bible more than we do. These have more freedom than we have to the other religions. Do not the children of the Lutherans also inure themselves to their religion from their childhood? Do they learn a Popish or Calvinistical catechism before they have learned a Lutheran one? Is not that a man's religion to which he accustoms himself? How doth a child, or a layman that hath been taught no religion, know what is Lutheranism, or Calvinism? Doth he not take that religion which is first offered to him? Besides, no fore-conceited opinion is so fast rooted, but that it will give place to clear demonstrations, which is confessed among all. Therefore, we shall never be able to confute any religion with the objection of fore-conceived opinions.

What shall I say more? Do other religions want civil learning? There are found amongst them sufficiently learned and ingenious men, and oftentimes they have much better and fitter means for the advancement of learning, than the Lutherans have; especially the Papists, who make choice of the best wits, whom they employ in a manner from their cradles to their full age, in nothing else but study, meditation, and continual exercises, and do abundantly supply them with all things which serve, or seem to serve, for their furthering and forwarding, and with all care and diligence do remove and take away whatsoever causeth, or seems to cause, any hindrance of their course. They study the Scriptures and fathers night and day, and refuse no labour.

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*labour in learning the foundation of their own religion, and in knowing and understanding the errors of others. Nay, the method and manner of learning, of comparing the Scriptures, of interpreting according to the analogi of faith, of bringing no sense to the Scriptures, and such other rules, cannot be unknown to them.*

*Confid.* Who is not forestalled with preconceived opinions? Is not every one brought up in the religion of his parents? which yet breeds but a natural complying with it, be it the best religion, until God, by his Spirit of regeneration, opens their eyes to apprehend the power of God, and the wisdom of God therein; without which, in their most zealous profession of it, for their fathers sake, and their education's sake, they will prove no better than hypocrites and factious, rather than conscionable in the maintenance of it—which yet may be done with as great strength of learning, as a natural man is capable of.—And though it be a false way wherein they have been brought up and bred, and they as zealous and factious in maintaining it as ever Saul was, who made havoc of the church, and entered into every house, and drew out both men and women, and put them in prison; yet the Lord, in the midst of his persecutions, met with him in the way, and confounded him, and struck him with blindness natural, to mind him thereby of his blindness spiritual; but afterwards he opened his eyes, and brought him out of darkness unto light, and made

made him not only a professor of that way of the gospel, which before he persecuted, but a famous preacher of it also, even the great doctor of the Gentiles. So saith Peter of the Jews to whom he wrote, that they were redeemed from their vain conversation, received by tradition of their fathers : And as this was true of the Jews, so of the Gentiles also, as Jeremiah prophesied, Jer. xvi. 19. " The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the world, and shall say, Surely our forefathers have inherited lies and vanity, wherein there was no profit." And Isaiah also—" I have been sought of them that asked not : I was found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, to a nation that was not called by my name."—Some while the Apostles and Evangelists abstained from preaching to the Gentiles—and Peter was called in question, for going in and preaching Christ unto the Gentiles, Acts xi. 19, 20, 21. " And they that were scattered abroad because of the persecution that arose about Stephen, went throughout till they came unto Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no man, but the Jews only. Now some of them were men of Cyprus, and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, and preached the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, so that a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."—See how suddenly they turned from idols to serve the living God, quite con-



trary to the traditions received of their forefathers. So true is that of Leo, *Ubi Deus Magister est, quam cito discitur quod docetur*; where God is Master, one quickly learns what is taught.

So that these were as little trained up in the Bible, and other books of the Christian religion, as the Papists; yea, and far less. Any man hath freedom to try other religions: have not we Christians freedom to try the religion of the Jews and of the Turks? and God abandons some to turn Turks; and Papists have liberty to try our Protestant religion; Vergorius, a Popish bishop, did so, with a purpose to refute it; but the hand of God was with him to open his eyes, as with Saul, and he turned Protestant. By these words, "Calvinists and others urge the Bible more than we do," it appears this author is no Calvinist; so by the words following, "Do not the children of the Lutherans also inure themselves to their religion from their childhood?" doth it not argue that this author is no Lutheran; so that what to make of him I know not; for he would not seem to be a Papist; it seems he is yet to choose his religion: and yet if this course of his be serious, it is considerable; but he need not go far for an answer to so superficial a discourse as this.

It is true, naturally every one is apt to be of the religion he received of his fathers, but without illumination divine; though he be in the right way, yet shall he have no comfortable apprehension of it; and, by illumination

divine

divine, Saul of a persecutor shall become a preacher, and the Gentiles shall have their eyes opened, and be brought out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God, though blindness come upon Israel, as they have been held under it now for 1600 years. A very absurd thing it is to say, we shall never be able to confute any religion with the objection of fore-conceived opinions: for this may be objected to them that are in the right way, as well as to them that are in a wrong way; and undoubtedly the true way may be embraced in a wrong manner; "For they are not all Israel that are of Israel," Rom. ix. 6. God threatens sometimes to visit the circumcised with the uncircumcised; and the reason why the Lord gave the Christian world over to illusions, to believe lies, was because they received not the love of the truth.

As for civil learning, surely there wanted not both civil and natural knowledge among the Gentiles more than enough; for this made them esteem "the cross of Christ foolishness; which yet to them that are saved, it is the power of God." For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will cast away the understanding of the prudent.—Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made the wisdom of this world foolishness? For seeing the world by wisdom knew not God, in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them

that believe," 1 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20, 21. And shall we now think that civil learning and natural ingenuity prefer men to the grace of God, or make them the more fit to receive the gospel? Of princes, who more famous for natural parts, learning, wisdom, ingenuity, than Trajan, and Marcus Antoninus!—Of inferior condition, than Pliny the second, the officer of Trajan, who speaks in commendation of the innocency of Christians! Yet neither of these became a Christian: nay, both these princes were persecutors of the church of God. And at Athens, for all their learning, which made them renowned throughout the world, who were converted by Paul's preaching there but Dionysius, and Damaris, and some others, Acts xvii. 34.

Papists are great scholars undoubtedly, not in logic and philosophy only, and that in all kinds, but in divinity also, and that in the most learned way. Aquinas, a great divine, his Sums, I have heard Dr Reynolds call it, that absolute body of divinity; but his wit served him to serve that church's turn in those days; and in maintaining idolatry he is the most shameful writer that ever was, for he will have the image worshipped with the same honour that is due to the thing represented by it, and that by an argument drawn out of Aristotle, *de memoria et reminiscencia*, opposed by Durand, Picus Mirandula, and others.—I remember what Cicero said of the Grecians, *Do illis eruditionem, do doctrinam; fidem et religionem*



*gionem nunquam coluerunt ; they have learning and knowledge ; but neither faith nor religion.* Yet I will not say so of the church of Rome, tho' one sometimes did. I know it was renowned for faith all the world over in the days of St Paul ; but a degenerate time came, and as at the first preaching of the gospel men turned from idols to serve the living God, so in after ages even Christians, and Roman Christians as much as any, if not more, turned from the living God to serve idols ; and the whore of Babylon, who made all nations drunken with the blood of God's saints, is clearly the church of Rome, as it is at this day, and hath been for many generations ;—whatsoever their learning be, the greater advantage they have for the countenancing of their errors, heresies, superstitions and idolatries, which yet we nothing fear. The apostle hath taught us to esteem no knowledge but this, even “ of Christ and him crucified :” *Si Christum discis nihil est si cætera nescis ; si Christum nescis nihil est si cætera discis ;* if ye learn Christ, it is matter of no consequence whether ye be acquainted with other things ; if ye are ignorant of Christ, it availeth nothing if ye know all others.—And if we fear not their learning, much less have we cause to fear their wit or wisdom either, or whatsoever projects of theirs ; likewise, none of these should in common reason commend their religion, God usually infatuating the wisdom of the wise. They have all furtherance, I confess, beyond us ; yet God hath not tied himself to annex

his truth to these furtherances, least of all if they be employed not indifferently to the investigation of truth, but prejudicately to support their own cause, the madness whereof hath been in these later days made known to the world more than ever. The trial whereof we make by the touch-stone of God's word, according to the counsel of God himself; "to the law and to the testimonies: if they speak not according to this, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. Yet we study Scriptures and fathers too as well as they, and we have them amongst us that yield to them not a jot; nay, do we not study their writings too, much more than our own? I willingly profess I have done so all along, that I might come acquainted with their best strength and fastness; in all which, I find nothing but illusions in the maintenance of those tenets wherein we differ from them. As for interpreting of Scriptures, it is well known they have been brought unto it by force; so was Cajetan in his old years, after he had tasted of Luther's course, who would admit of no other authority in dispute but the word of God.—And their commentaries, for the most part, are but a mass of collections out of others; yet I despise them not; I am content to use them as soon as any of our own; not so much to learn by them, as to observe how they strain their wits to quench that light of truth, which, in most places, breaks forth to the discovering of their errors. Well they may talk of bringing

ing no sense to the Scriptures; but their practice is nothing answerable.

*Disc.* But perhaps God hath not granted them his Spirit and his grace.

*I answer*—God being sought unto and solicited by prayers, denies to no man his grace and Spirit of truth. Now, men of other religions crave of God the enlightening of their mind, and direction in a right way, no less than ourselves; nay (as far as we can discern) perhaps with a greater fervency and zeal; neither are we to think that they ask it out of hypocrisy and with dissimulation, and that so they would mock God. Therefore, it is to be taken for granted, that the Spirit is where the fruits of the Spirit are found, of which none ought to boast above others. Nay more, the knowledge of understanding the Scriptures is a peculiar gift of the Spirit, which is granted no less to others than to us. It is true, indeed, that he only understands the Scriptures, who hath the Spirit that dictated them; and (as it is in worldly laws) no doctors interpretation or deciding doth justify, till the lawgiver approve that deciding. Yet he that boasteth of such approbation of the Spirit is bound to shew it, unless he will be counted but an ordinary doctor.

*Confid.* We are bid to try the spirits, whether they be of God: now, we have no other trial of the Spirit of truth speaking in any, but by the word of God,—so the Bereans tried the doctrine of St Paul, Acts xvii.—and the apostles professed to preach nothing but what they confirmed by the word of God. And our  
Saviour



Saviour referred the Jews hereunto for the trial of himself—"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me," John v. 39. Now, we have a more complete rule of trial, the books both of the Old Testament, and of the New. St Paul delivered the whole counsel of God to the Ephesians, Acts xx. and do we think that the whole Scripture doth fail in some necessary part thereof? But I would Popery did not plainly contradict that Scripture which is generally received by us both; if so, I would bear with them for the rest, though in two things we cannot endure that ought should be imposed upon us besides the written word of God, namely, articles of faith, and part of God's worship. Now, by this course of trial we find, that not the spirit of truth, but the spirit of error, hath possessed them in all points of difference between us.

Prayers, I grant, are the ordinary means to obtain any grace at the hands of God, save one, and that is the spirit of faith; of all the rest, it is true, *fides impetrat, et lex imperat*; faith seeks and receives, but the law commands; but with a limitation or two. 1. All knowledge necessary to salvation, according to that, 1 John ii. 27.—and Nider, though a Papist, his interpretation thereof in his *Consolatory of an afflicted Conscience*. 2. Other graces also, and that in such a measure as shall be found for each man's calling: and I think every Christian should rest contented with such an indulgence

indulgence. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now, hath God disposed the members, every one of them in the body, at his own pleasure: For if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body," 1 Cor. xii. 17, 18, 19.

Men may draw near to God with their lips, when their hearts are estranged far from him; and how their hearts stand affected we know not; God alone beholdeth their heart: nay, we are not so much as privy to their prayers; but we examine their doctrines by God's word, according to that, *Sunt certi libri dominici; the Lord's books are sure.* And it was a worthy saying of Martin Luther, mentioned by Scultetus in his story of the first ten years of Reformation—*Solis canonicis debemus fidem; cæteris omnibus judicium; we ought to believe in the canonical books, or word of God alone; and give our opinion of others.* I do not deny but all the regenerate who have the Spirit of God, according to that, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry, Abba, father," Gal. iv. 6.) do seek unto God to enlighten their minds; and God hears them, and grants their requests in his good time, according to the imitations formerly mentioned; but who they are we know not; and we are bid to try the spirits; nor what their fervency and zeal is are we acquainted with; yet surely, it is not  
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for the sake of their fervency that God hears them, but for Christ's sake. And are not they as far bound in charity to think of us, as this author would shape us to be obliged to think of them? We acknowledge no spirit of faith, but that which is the Spirit of truth, at least in all fundamentals necessarily required unto salvation, and to God's holy worship without idolatry.

As for the prayers of Papists, they are well known to be shamefully foul; they were wont more frequently to run to saints than to God; and the bishop of Boss was to seek whether he should run to God in the name of Christ's blood, or in the name of the Virgin's milk; for he was made to profess in the wall in certain verses, that he knew not well which of the two he should prefer; nay, if of any prayers God saith, "tho' he make many prayers I will not hear," Isa. i. 15. Surely he should say as much of these in my judgment. Have not Turks their prayers as well as Papists? and may they not be performed with great fervency and zeal? and may they not be as expert in tricks of gesture as the Papists? as I have heard once of a child trained up to it by her mother, even unto admiration; the countenance composed unto a sad and solemn disposition, and the hands lifted up first to an equal height with the breasts, after a while to an equal height with the head, and lastly above the head; and all this in dumb shew, without one word of ejaculation.

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As for hypocrisy here mentioned, I doubt it is delivered hand over head: For, first, hypocrisy is most considerable in a right way, and not in a wrong way; the reason whereof is, because natural men are naturally apt to embrace false ways, and lewd ways too, too truly; and as apt they may be to embrace the way of truth hypocritically, and not only to profess Christ, but to preach him in pretence, that is, not chastely; even to add afflictions to the bonds of so holy an apostle even as St Paul was: so we nothing doubt but Papists are true Papists, without hypocrisy; but I much doubt, that the greater part of them by far are too far off from being true Christians; and this I willingly confess they pretend, but very hypocritically; this runs with them in blood; they have it from their mother, even the mother of whoredoms; and her arms are Babylon in a mystery. And the second beast, though he had two horns like the Lamb, yet he spake like the dragon; we know all their proceedings in pretence are, *In nomine Domini incipit omne malum*; in the name of the Lord begins every evil: neither is it necessary, that by hypocrisy a man should think to mock God, if God could be mocked; for there is a secret hypocrisy which a man's own heart is not conscious of, until God be pleased in mercy to discover it; and as for gross hypocrisy, it makes a man a plain atheist.

This author seems to be taken with the beauty of the whore of Babylon;—he is so much

much in love with Papists, as to obtrude upon us an acknowledgment that they have the fruits of the Spirit; and consequently, without any denial, that they have the Spirit. To proceed one degree further, were to profess antichrist to be Christ, and Christ antichrist.

To understand the Scriptures, is but to acknowledge the true meaning of them—and this we deny that Papists have: as touching all the points of difference between us, which they pretend to ground upon Scripture, yea, and in many other particulars, they are wide of the right understanding of them; so may our divines be also, and like enough; that as Mr Hooker saith, there are some depths of Scripture, the searching out whereof will hold us as long as the world lasts. Yet I deny not but a reprobate may have the knowledge of the Scriptures as well as an elect, this being no grace of sanctification, but of edification; but to know the Scriptures to be the word of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, that I take to be peculiar to a regenerate spirit, in whom the Spirit of God dwells as the fountain of the life of grace; of which indwelling of the Spirit, a child of God may be conscious in a comfortable manner without boasting.

I count it an absurd course, for any to justify his interpretation of Scripture to be found, because he hath the Spirit: we are ready to dispute the meaning we give of Scripture, and to prove it against all opposites made against it;

and

and we look not that any interpretation of Scripture we give, should be received any further than we make it appear to be the truth of God, to the consciences of them we deal with.

Obj. *If any should here object, that the Scriptures themselves bear witness of their own clearness, according to that, Thy word is a lanthorn to my feet, and a light unto my paths.*

*I answer—All the commands of God are his word, and so are all his works which are through his word; for it is confessed by all, that God sets forth his word by nature, the creature, signs, wonders, beneath, above, and by infinite ways; also the Scriptures witness that many things neither are nor can be written. Therefore, the word of his voice is taken diversely in the Scriptures; and so by consequence, all that is called God's word is not necessarily to be understood of the Scriptures. Hereunto add, that at that time many parts of Scripture were not yet written; wherefore, the evidence of the thing manifestly proveth, that this is not spoken of the whole argument and letter of the Scripture, for as much as the figures of the prophecy of the Apocalypse, and infinite other things belonging to the fulfilling of those prophecies, were bidden from the prophets themselves, and the fathers, (much more than from others,) and are yet hidden. Christ himself speaks in parables, to the end that men may hear with their ears and not understand. The Scripture itself, in very many places, witnesseth that the word of God is secret, obscure, bidden, and discovered only to the Spirit, or to the godly only, to whom*



whom God reveals it ; so that in the Scriptures there are more testimonies of their obscurity, than of their clearness ; yet is not the Scripture hereby either rejected or slighted. For even before the Law was given and written, men had a certain light, by the help whereof they might, if they would, have found out the truth more clearly than we ; and although in the New Testament a great light be risen, yet must we not think that in the Old Testament there was a mere blindness. Whence we may reason, that God thought it not useful for us to reveal all things to us ; but though all things perhaps be not necessary to be known, yet nevertheless there may be had a certain and infallible way of interpreting, by the help whereof the most, and most necessary controversies may be decided ; of which, if trial be made, a clear light and mere harmony may be shewn, in such Scriptures as (according to the opinion of many) are obscure. It is possible also, that there should be not a few other ways of illustrating that which is obscure, although this ill-tried way be not used alone ; for there may both be admitted and used, agreements coming from the same Spirit and word, sometimes where there is no demonstration.

*Confid.* The further I wade in this business, the worse I like my employment ; and hereupon I resolve, that I will no more be employed in any such business, unless I am fairly dealt withal,—that I may know who is the author I am to deal with, at least of what profession he is in religion ; for, upon the perusing of this section, some doubts arise within me concerning the intention of the author, carrying himself

himself in a covert manner that he may be unknown, which doth much move me. Henry the Seventh of England was wont to say, he desired nothing more than that he might know his adversary that encountered him: we do not use to buy a pig in a poke; nor will I hereafter encounter with I know not whom, nor of what profession he is.

Here the author returns to oppose the clearness of Scripture, considering it hand over head, and so opposing it; whereas our Saviour requires that we should search the Scriptures, that is, study them well, and inquire after the true meaning of them. No man searcheth after that which is before his eyes; yea, we are commanded to search for wisdom as we search after gold and silver; and a man will be content to search deep for treasure. It was wont to be said, that *in profundo latet veritas*; *truth lies deep*; how much more should we be content to search diligently, and dig deep, for the treasures of that truth which is according unto godliness; after the treasures of that wisdom which makes us wise unto salvation?—Then again, we distinguish between things necessary to salvation, and other things: things necessary to salvation, we say are plainly contained in Scripture; many other things are not so.

Here we have a wild answer at the first,—  
“All the commandments of God are his word, and so are all his works which are through his word.”

1. To say, "so are all his works," is to say, "all his works are his word;" which yet forthwith is corrected, by saying they "are through his word:" yet of old I have read in Chrysostome, of a double book of God, the book of his word, and the book of his creatures, and that God at the first did teach his creatures by his works, afterwards by his written word. It is most true, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work," Ps. xix. 1. And the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are seen from the creation, being considered in his works," Rom. i. 20. So by the administration of his providence in governing the world, "he leaves not himself without witness giving us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," Acts xiv. 17. Yet the knowledge of God hereby being gathered only by discourse of natural reason, men may fail of finding God, though they grope after him, Acts, xvii. 27.—and the wisdom of philosophers hath denied the creation, and maintained God to be a necessary Agent: and they who granted and acknowledged the beginning of the world, (as all they who were before,) yet utterly denied that the world was made originally out of nothing; and therefore the apostle tells us, that by faith we believe the world was made. Not only God's commands are his word, but the revelations of the mystery of godliness, and these are the things most remote from our capacities. As for the last



as a rule of life, that is more or less written in the hearts of all men. It is true, the author of the book *De Vocatione Gentium*; concerning the calling of the Gentiles, talks of such a manner of instruction by God's works; but, I pray, do not compare that in clearness to the word of God: what ground have we for the right interpretation of signs, and wonders, beneath, above?—Astrologers would make us believe they read strange things in the constellations, referred to mens nativities; but what ground have we for this calculation? What Abraham, the father of the faithful, discoursed thereof in his astronomical lectures read by him in the plain of Mamre, we have received no tidings hereof from the hill Amarath in Ethiopia. I know that in holy Scripture thunder is called the voice of God; I know also that the Lord spake unto the Patriarchs; but that word is not written; winds and storms also are said to fulfil his word, by a metaphor; because, what he will have done by them is done by them, as if they were most obedient and faithful servants unto their Master, whom yet they know not any more than ravens do, though in Scripture-pharse, and by a figure of speech, they are said to call upon him.—Now, we are upon another point, namely, as touching the Scriptures, the written word of the prophets and apostles; and the question is about the clearness of them, or the intelligible nature of them to all such as will understand: and to such, saith Solomon, knowledge is easy;

which I take to be spoken of the knowledge of God by the Scriptures, whereunto I am sure our Saviour refers the Jews; and the apostle would not have us affect to be wise above that which is written.

It is true, when that was delivered, "thy law is a lanthorn unto my feet," none of the later prophets had committed their prophecies unto writing, much less were the books of the New Testament written then: but in reference to all the books of the Old Testament our Saviour spake, when he said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me," John v. 39. And as for the books of the New Testament, the gospels were written that men might acknowledge the certainty of those things whereof they had been instructed by word of mouth, Luke, i. 4. which could not be, were they not intelligible by a studious reader; and Paul was in bonds when he wrote of the whole Scripture, that it was profitable to teach, to convince, to correct, to "instruct in righteousness, that the man of God might be made absolute, being made perfect to all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Now, if we deny the intelligible condition of Scripture, the profitable nature of it therewithal must utterly be removed. The apostles, we know, by preaching converted many; surely the word preached was understood by the hearers; otherwise it had wrought but a wild conversion: Now, look what they preached that is committed

to writing in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in their *Epistles* written unto several churches.

The knowledge of the figures of the prophecies of the *Revelation*, and the like, is not necessary to salvation; and great reason they should be carried in a mysterious way, like as the mysteries of Christ's person, and of his office, in breaking the Serpent's head, were carried a long time in the clouds of types and figures. Had it been known that the Messiah must be crucified before he reigned, the Devil would not have been so forward to possess the heart of Judas, with a project of betraying him into the hands of his enemies, to procure his death. So the Revelation in the New Testament, and many of the like nature in the Old, concerning the Devil and antichrist's practice, no marvel if they be mysteriously carried, that neither the Devil nor antichrist should understand them, until they were accomplished.— Nevertheless, the Lord by his Spirit, which dictated them, can inspire his servants with an understanding heart to know the meaning of them, when the time comes appointed for the communication of this knowledge; many shall pass to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, as if the opening of the world by navigation and commerce, and the increase of knowledge, should meet together in one time and age, as one wittily observeth. We have seen, of late years, a strange progress made in opening the mysteries of the Revelation, and other mysterious prophecies of the Old Testament, even to admiration. The time when



first antichrist should be discovered, and protested against, is found out in Daniel's numbers, lest we should wonder at the fathers ignorance hereof: for as Christians at their first conversion from idols to serve the living God, did forthwith "look for the Son of God's coming from heaven, to deliver us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i. 10. Yea, and some were of opinion in the apostles days, that it should be within the age of a man; whereupon Paul wrote his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, wherein he gives to understand, that an apostacy must come first, and the man of sin must be revealed, and before that the Roman empire must be broken, 2 Thess. ii. compared with 1 Thess. iv. 15. So in Austin's days, that good father projects that the coming of Christ might be 400 years off, nay, suppose 500, he would not go further, presuming that the beast which slaughtered the Lord's witnesses, should not continue above three years and an half. Now, we have no cause to wonder at this, when we consider what Daniel hath written concerning this, and how blessed a thing it should be to live at that time, when antichrist should be proclaimed to the world and revealed, Dan. xi. For then nothing remained to be looked for, but the blasting of him with the breath of the Lord's mouth, and the utter abolishing of him by the brightness of his coming. The reconciling of Ezekiel's measures of New Jerusalem; with John's measures in the Revelations, is a great mystery and held to be desperate, yet now it is made feasible.

feasible ; nor so only, but cleared throughout. So the number of the beast, 666, how long hath the Christian world groped after the meaning of it, as a blind man after his way ? What various notions hath the investigation hereof produced in mens brains, after that of Ireneus accommodated to the word *lateinos*, and at length, for want of a better, the best students in these mysteries driven to come back thither again. But now the vanity thereof newly discovered, and that at full, even by every text calling us expressly to calculate this, which is not to rest in this number, but by calculation of this to find out another number, which will notably decypher unto us that beast. And, indeed, the number of the beast, 666, is opposed to the number of Christ's church, 144, and the number most momentous arising by the calculation thereof, is the number 12, the root thereof ; and no other calculation belongs to a single number than that which is called the extraction of roots, and the number 25, found to be the root of 666, so far as it comes to be said in the usual way of arithmetic, to have a root, discovering strange mysteries concerning the delineating of that beast, the body of antichrist, in a wonderful manner.

No marvel if these mysteries were hidden from the prophets themselves, who wrote those prophecies : For, 1st, The knowledge of them was nothing necessary to their salvation ; 2d, God had appointed a certain time when the light of them should break forth to irradiate his church, with unspeakable consolation,

when they stood most in need thereof, the accomplishment of those prophecies drawing near.

Christ spake in parables to some, not to all; yet some of his parables were understood by them even against whom they were spoken in particular: those that were not understood by the multitude, our Saviour revealed to his disciples, as often as they sought it; yea, and other mysteries too, namely, the signs foregoing the destruction of Jerusalem, his own coming, and the end of the world, Matt. xxiv.

It is true, the Scriptures contain the mysteries of godliness, which are not apprehended according to their condition, but by the regenerate; but as for the meaning of the Scripture, it is quite of another nature, (which this author considers not,) and is incident to a reprobate, yea, in such a measure as to make him an able doctor in the church, and orthodox throughout, which may tend to the edification of others, when in the mean time such a one shall fall short of the salvation of his own soul. "The secret of the Lord, which he reveals to them that fear him, is the secret of his covenant," Ps. xxv. 14. There is a secret also in faith-catholic, and in all the mysteries of godliness, which is peculiar to the regenerate only, and it is to discern the wisdom of God, and the power of God in them who have true faith. A reprobate may believe the same things by a natural faith only, yea believe it, and carry themselves like good scholars too while they instruct others therein.

Still



Still we say, that the Scripture is plain and clear enough, as touching all things necessary to salvation; and all this discourse is plausible only through distinction; and to deny the Scripture to be fairly intelligible to one that is desirous to know the meaning of it, is a great disparagement to the word of God, and dishonour to God himself, disparaging either his goodness that would not, or his wisdom that he knew not how to order it, so that by searching the Scriptures they might have eternal life.

If before the law men had a light whereby they might find the truth more clearly than we, then the former times were times of greater light and grace than the later; but this is contrary both to the general judgment of the Christian world, and to universal experience. For as light naturally increaseth more and more, until it be perfect day, so it hath been with light spiritual; yet the sun, the fountain of light natural, hath sometimes gone backward ten degrees; not so the Sun of righteousness: men have gone backward, I confess, in the course of their obedience; but God hath gone forward rather than backward, in the course of administration of his grace.— We do not say there was a mere blindness, or blindness at all, in God's children, (although in present discourse not of man's blindness, but of God's progress in causing the irradiation of his light;) but this we say, that the word of the prophets was a "most sure word, to which our forefathers did well to take heed,

as to a light that shineth in a dark place" but now a long time day hath dawned, and the gospel "is the day-star that ariseth in our hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. "For that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is he who hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. And, in these days of grace, "we all behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

To say, that though all things be not necessary to be known, yet there may be had a certain and infallible way of interpreting, whereby the most and most necessary controversies may be decided, is to represent a shew of antithesis where there is none. But that is little material; but here is a declination to the contrary extreme; hitherto the clearness of Scripture hath been opposed; here an infallibility of interpreting is introduced; but *mediotutissimus ibis*; the middle path is safest; and virtue usually consists in a mediocrity, which Horace calls *auream mediocritatem*; the golden mean. Since the apostles days, the true church of Christ challengeth to herself no infallible authority of interpreting Scripture; 'tis enough that, in things necessary to salvation, the Lord assures us by his Spirit that we are not deceived; that is sufficient for the state of grace and as for infallibility, let us be content to have that condition reserved for the state of glory

glory. I nothing doubt, but by study, and care, and pains, most controversies may be so clearly decided, as shall be sufficient either for the converting of a capable hearer, to the embracing of it, or for the convicting him of obstinacy in withstanding it; but I little looked that the beginning of this discourse would have had so unsuitable an end. Mr Dury (as I remember) is occupied about some such method as this; I wish heartily it may succeed well,—but take heed we do not cry down all performances that have gone before us, as if they were palpable insufficiencies, in comparison to our own new inventions, whether in clearing truths controversial, or obscure places of Scripture. Well, we shall rest contented with that measure we are arrived unto, until a greater measure of light arise above the horizon of our sphere,—and, whensoever it comes, I trust we shall give it that respect which it deserves, and right thankfully entertain it, whether in the way of illustration, which best pleaseth the sense, or in the way of demonstration, which most justifieth the judgment.

*Disc. Nor am I moved with that objection, That it is enough for the Lutherans that they are assured of the truth of Lutheranism, though others cannot see and believe it: for this is not that which I would have. I enquire, how a man may be sure not of his own opinion, but of the truth: Now, if I believe and determine that such a thing is true, this is my opinion; yet is it not therefore the truth, seeing*



*seeing truth and opinion have nothing in them alike. A stedfast persuasion changeth not the essence of the thing whereof a man is persuaded: For then might melancholic persons, whose opinions are immovable, work miracles, and make all their conceits essential. The nature of true knowledge is this,—To be demonstrable, not to me, or some men, but to all, and to win a consent from any man, as two and three make five. A thing controverted, and which some understand one way, some another, can never make me certain and free from doubt, whether I have the truth or not; and he that knows no other than what he determines, may be excused of malice and hypocrisy. But this reasoning, I and my follower are sure of this thing, therefore it is true, is unreasonable reasoning.*

*Consid.* Surely if I am in a right way, it is enough for me to be assured of the truth; for me, it is for my salvation: yet because I am bound to seek for the salvation of others also, no man must imitate Cain, in saying, “am I my brother’s keeper?” yet that which is enough for me to be assured of the truth which I maintain, may be enough for another also, to bring him to be assured of the same truth: for if this sufficiency I speak of be in the way of rational discourse, out of the word of God; if it is itself sufficient; it is sufficient for the satisfaction of any that is capable thereof; and all such light being light natural, and in the way of discourse, is of a communicable nature to all rational creatures, by a rational discourse. But true faith is wrought by spiri-  
tual

tual illumination, which is not in my power to communicate unto any other; only the Spirit of God can do this, enlightening whom he will, while others are suffered to sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. And this is the only saving way to be sure of truths theological. It is true, that which I believe (whatsoever it be, and in what kind soever it be believed) is not therefore truth, because I believe it: but if I believe by illumination divine, it is therefore truth, because I believe it after such a manner, though this I cannot communicate to another, or make another hereby either be persuaded of it himself, or be persuaded that I am after such a sort persuaded of it. Light natural I may communicate unto another; light spiritual I cannot: and light natural, either in way of natural discourse, is communicative of itself, from commonly-known principles by the light of nature, or from principles on both sides agreed, as namely, that the Scriptures are the word of God. Now, when the Spirit of God enlightens me, the thing I embrace is not my opinion, but my faith, and my persuasion herein is in steadfastness, and nothing inferior to natural knowledge, but superior rather, light spiritual and divine being superior to light natural, like as knowledge by sense is superior to knowledge by reason, rational knowledge depending upon knowledge sensitive; for general principles do arise from experience and enumeration of particulars.—  
And

And, as I remember, *Theologia dicitur non esse argumentativa*; divinity is said to be not argumentative; to wit, as it is supernatural, and compared rather to sensitive knowledge; as to the sense of seeing, "Open mine eyes that I may see the wonderful things of thy law;" and to the sense of hearing, "He that hath an ear let him hear:" for it is one thing to hear the voice of a man, another thing to hear the voice of God; one thing to see a work wrought, another thing to behold the hand of God in it; one thing to discern the meaning of a Scripture-passage, another thing to discern the wisdom of God, and the power of God in it. So it is compared to the sense of smelling, 2 Cor. ii. 14. "We are a sweet savour unto God in Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; and where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together:" sometimes to the sense of tasting, as 1 Pet. ii. 2. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if ye have tasted that the Lord is bountiful." So Halensis professeth, that the things of God are apprehended *per modum gustus*; by the mode of taste. The sense of feeling doth fairly represent the knowledge of God by his works, Acts xvii. 27. "That they should seek the Lord, if so be they might have groped after him, and found him, though doubtless he be not far from every one of us." This author seems to take no notice hereof, no more than the Socinians do in these days, and that is the



foul spot I find in Mr Chillingworth's book: and be pleased, I pray, to put a difference between melancholic persons, and the children of God, who because they are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts: remember that of the apostle, "This persuasion is not of God," plainly giving to understand, that the persuasions of Christian faith are of God: yet I confess, this faith is grounded always upon God's word, wherein they should be so expert, as to be ready thence at all times to render a reason of their faith to any that should demand it. But that may an unregenerate person be able to do as well, yea, and many times better too.

When he saith, the nature of true knowledge is demonstrable, this is true of knowledge natural, not of knowledge Christian, which is grounded only on God's word; and it was never known that to prove a thing out of Scripture was called demonstration. Aristotle denies that moral philosophy is capable of demonstration, it proceeds only by persuasion: but it may be for the evidence of the Scripture aptly alledged, he calls it demonstration *katachrestikos*; yet consider, no deduction out of Scripture can be so clear, as to be exempted from all cavillings; but never was it known that any man cavilled with a truth as clear as this, that two and three make five. If we can never be free from doubt if the thing be controverted, as for instance, a passage of Scripture, some understanding it one way,

way, and some another ; what certainty can I have of any point of faith I maintain in opposition to Papists, to Socinians, to any heretic? yet I should not look that the thing controverted should free me from doubt, it is enough that I have good evidence for it, though all the world run a madding in controverting that which I believe. Now, no evidence of truths theological, and saving truths, is comparable to the evidence which proceeds from the illumination of the Spirit, giving me new eyes, as it were, and opening the eyes of my understanding, that I may see and discern the things of God, and that the Holy Spirit is able to free me from all doubt ; yet there is another knowledge which is natural, partly derived from natural principles, and partly from a dextrous interpretation of Scriptures, which we shall be able to make good against all cavillers to their confusion, and upon sober consciences to their assent ; but this is inferior to the illumination of the Spirit. I can hardly think any Christian to be so simple or wilful to reason thus—*I and my follower are sure of this thing ; therefore, it is true* : if they should I see no reason but they might proceed one step further, and say, I myself alone think this to be true, and therefore it is true ; but the Spirit of illumination is given only to satisfy them that have it, not to boast of it (but to comfort themselves with it rather than much less to obtrude it upon others ; only light natural is communicable unto others by reason of testimony.

rational discourse; light spiritual is not. I cannot more communicate that to another than my seeing, or hearing, or smelling, or tasting.

*Disc. Lastly: If we build our religion only upon the Scripture, the learned shall have a great prerogative above the unlearned, in the matter of faith and religion, and shall be more engaged in thankfulness to God than they; and so religion shall favour and cleave to good wits.—Also, many have their senses exercised in the Scripture, or are more inventive and ingenious than others; therefore, if a man could by disputing and reasoning confute some theses, and as it were take away a man's opinion from him, and become conqueror, he should also take away his religion; and the other should be constrained either to take up his conqueror's religion, or, against his conscience, to keep his own.*

*Nor will that answer serve the turn, our divines and pastors can answer you, though I cannot: for then should I believe with another man's faith; but faith must be mine, not another man's, else should salvation also be another man's. If religion be the service of God, surely it is necessary that I understand that service which I must perform to my Lord. Seeing God will not reckon another man's service for mine, and cannot be served by a substitute, it remains that we conclude—Controversies are to be left to learned men, and are not so very necessary. It may be answered, Then also religion is to be left to learned men; for controversies are our very religion; for (serving the consideration of them) there is no difference, but Papists are Protestants, and Protestants are Papists—Look how*



*much a man knows of controversies, so much doth he know of his own religion. The state of a man's salvation is such as his religion and his faith.—Now there is but one salvation, and but one faith.—But if controversies belong to the learned only, wherefore have the laymen endured so many afflictions, distresses, nay, and death itself, for those controversies sake?*

*I know indeed that a Calvinist doctor, one Dr Bergius, a preacher at Brēmen, affirms in his late published Sermons, that controversies are not merely necessary to salvation; that the Scripture is plain and clear in those things which are necessary to salvation, and that there was never any contrariety between the religions themselves. At which also the *Leipsick-Collation* between the Lutherans, and Calvinists seems to aim.*

*Confid.* In all professions, whether liberal or mechanical, the learned have a prerogative above the unlearned; and what inconvenience is there if it be so in the Christian religion also? Doth not St Peter tell us that the unlearned pervert the Scripture to their own destruction, 2 Pet. iii. 16.—yet this prerogative is in learning only, not in holiness, the unlearned may be as holy as the learned, and have as great an interest both in sanctifying grace and in saving glory. What said Augustine of himself, and such like scholars, in comparison of his mother Monica, and such like holy, though simple women—*Mulierculæ in lacrimis suis calum nobis præripiunt; when we have done all we can with all our learning, the women with their tears will get heaven before*

And as for holiness, so for faith : 'an unlearned man may have faith as well as the learned ; nay, that faith which is called *fides infusa*, may be found in a man unlearned, when the faith of him that is learned is found to be no better than *fides acquisita*, a faith natural ; and they that have true faith by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, shall not want gracious wits.—Howsoever that religion which is by faith natural, be accompanied with better natural wits, yet an idle wit (be it never so good) will hardly prove learned ; and be it never so learned, if it be without grace, such a man's religion will prove but vain ; and though he be able to worst another in disputation, yet shall he never pull true religion in any child of God (be he never so weak and unlearned) out of socket, because our faith and religion consist not in wisdom of words, but in the power of the Spirit, as St Paul speaks, saying, " My word and my preaching stood not in the enticing speech of man's wisdom, but in plain evidence of the Spirit and power : That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. 4. 5. Nay, were my faith only natural, and I had good evidence out of the Scripture for it, tho' that knowledge be no other than such as is annexed to the common profession of Christianity ; yet the philosopher tells me, that I must not be beaten out of my hold in such a case, because I am not able to answer every sophism or argument that is brought against it. Nay, the philosopher in his ethics teacheth

me, that some are as tenacious of their opinions, for which they have but weak reasons, as others are of their opinions, which they hold confirmed with great strength of argument; so that every way it is an insupportable fiction, that the most learned must always conquer the faith and the religion of the unlearned, without flying to any such sculking hole as to say, *Our divines and pastors can answer you, though I cannot.* But I wonder much that any sober Christian, upon any pretence, should dispute against the building of our religion only upon Scripture; unless with Papists he would bring in traditions, or rely on the church, or on the decision of the Pope. For if we fly from the word of God, we must rest either upon the word of man, or upon natural reason. A Christian, I conceive, should think the Scripture sufficient to direct us in the service of God: our Saviour directs the Jews to the searching of Scripture, for the discerning of him.

And if controversies be left to learned men, yet there is no cause why our religion should, but only the defence of it controversially, maintaining it by variety of arguments and deductions out of holy Scripture, and solving contrary arguments brought against it in any particular point of faith; but the profession of it surely shall belong to him that sits at Gamaliel's feet, as well as to Gamaliel himself; nor only to such as sit at his feet, but to such also as follow the plough-tail, yea, and to the weaker sex of women, and to children too;



too; for even to such belongeth the kingdom of God. And were there no book at all written, or sermon preached, in any point of controversies or difference between us, yet Papists should be Papists still, and not Protestants; and Protestants should be Protestants still, and not Papists; and the whore of Babylon should be the whore of Babylon still, and no spouse of Christ; and antichrist a false prophet still, and no true prophet. For the faith and profession of a Papist makes him a Papist, whether he writes controversies or no, the smallest part of them being able to perform the task: so the Protestants profession and protestation against the corruptions of the church of Rome, makes him a Protestant, though he never set pen to paper to contend for the faith once given to the saints; though this be a duty, I confess, but no common duty belonging unto all, but peculiarly appertaining to the man of God, able not only to exhort with wholesome doctrine, but also to convince them that say against it—For articles of faith and their profession of them, laymen have suffered with great constancy and patience, but not for controversies, though they have been ready to give a reason of their faith to all that asked it, and witness a good confession of it, as our Saviour did before Pilate, as the book of Acts and Monuments recordeth of them, and St Paul of our blessed Saviour.—Dr Bergius acknowledgeth that controversies are not very necessary to salvation; which I interpret thus—Not necessary to the being of the church, but

only to her well-being, when the Christian faith is oppugned by heretics. Between Lutherans and Calvinists, we acknowledge, there is no difference in fundamentals, as appeareth sufficiently at the conference at Leipfich.

*Disc.* *This I am persuaded is very true, that had the Holy Ghost judged those controverted questions necessary to salvation, it would have expressed and propounded them in the holy Scripture clearly and plainly, seeing those epistles were sent to simple, and lay men especially. Nor doth it seem likely to be true, that ever there were so many articles of faith drawn out of them, as are now to be read in the catechisms, common-places, and compends of divines. As yet there is no certain number of them determined, seeing some divines have propounded more, and some fewer; and some religions have, in process of time, either added or abated whole articles, and after many miseries endured for the defence of some of them, entering a way of moderation, they have determined that for tolerable and indifferent, which before they thought damnable. But, howsoever, there are so many of them, that a man may deservedly call in question the present necessity of them: and this seems the best solution to disintangle and appease perplexed, doubtful, and erring consciences.*

*Consd.* It is a very uncouth speech, proceeding from a wild conceit, to say, that God would have expressed and appointed controverted questions plainly and clearly, if that had been necessary. It is not the proposition of controverted questions, though never plainly and clearly delivered, that sets an

to controversies, but the clear and substantial solution of them; for herein that which hath any show of being necessary, is not the proposing of them, but the deciding of them: and it were a very preposterous course to talk of deciding controversies, before there were any controversies moved; as if a physician's wisdom and goodness should move him to heal a man before he is wounded: rather he should take care to preserve a man's health, that he might not fall into sickness. And so God's wisdom and goodness hath sufficiently provided for the health of his church, through the integrity of doctrine delivered in his word, and that in a manner sufficiently intelligible and plain to them that come with honest hearts, and studious desires, to seek after truth and to embrace it. But St Paul tells us of oppositions to the truth, made by men of corrupt minds,—plainly giving us to understand, that they came with corrupt minds to the reading of God's word, and so pervert it, as St Peter speaks, and thereby pervert themselves first; and afterwards they speak wrested things to the corrupting of others, and hinder them from being sound in the faith, Tit. i. 13.

St Peter exhorts us to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. iii. 18. And St Paul would not have us stand at a stay, but grow forward unto perfection. There is a plerophory and fulness of faith that we should strive unto, and of knowledge as well as of holiness: for this life is our way to heaven, and still we must draw nearer



thitherwards, by knowing all that we can know by the word, Deut. xxix. 29. It is revealed to that purpose, and it is "able to make the man of God perfect to every good work," 2 Tim. iii. 17. "Add unto virtue knowledge," saith St Peter, 2 Pet. i. 5. And St Paul prays on the behalf of the Colossians, that "they might be fulfilled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that they might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God," Col. i. 9, 10. Why then should we take offence at the multiplying of articles? In all professions, men who delight in knowledge are never satisfied; nothing is more congruous to our intelligent natures than light of knowledge; while we live here on earth we shall never come to ripeness of age in Christ; therefore, we must be growing still, and edifying ourselves, and one another, in our most holy faith; the body of Christ must be edified till we come to fulness of age; and, as we must increase in knowledge, so being obnoxious to error, it behoves us to labour for the discovery of it more and more. That error in taking the number of the beast, 666, to denote only *lateinos*, hath endured ever since the days of Ireneus, that is from the next age after the apostles; and it is now lately discovered, and the true meaning substituted in the place thereof, as never the like before; and it is commendable for men to see their former errors, much more to confess them. Of all Austin's  
works,

works, there are none more tending to his honour and renown than his *Retractions*, wherein he retracts the errors of his faith, and his confessions, and where he acknowledgeth the errors of his life—This is most Christian ingenuity; and, I think, never was any man more renowned in this kind than he. It is necessary for every Christian to strive forwards unto perfection, *necessitate præcepti, by necessity of commandment*; but if he fail through negligence, this is a very pardonable sin, upon our confession of it. As for things necessary to salvation, they are but few; but the knowledge of God and the things of God are so sweet to a regenerate taste, having already tasted how bountiful the Lord is, that he will be carried as naturally to desire the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby, as new-born babes do desire the milk of their mothers breasts, 1 Pet. ii. 1. As for perplexed and doubting, and erring consciences, men may perplex themselves, and raise doubts causelessly, and err in this; and this error will be the greater, when, after all this, they pretend perplexity and doubts made unto them, when they are only the mists which themselves have raised to blear their own eyes; and such a work, I think, is never more inauspiciously performed, than when they set their wits on work to dispute themselves out of the Lord's verge, and circle, within the compass whereof alone he useth to charm all his elect, after they have run their wild race and compass, and bring them home like the prodigal child to his father,

ther, so them to their heavenly father, and therewithal to the sobriety of their wits, and integrity of their senses, that they may say, "Oh, what love have I to thy law! all the day long is my study in it; the law of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver; by this I have more understanding than my teachers." Indeed, the law of the Lord is a perfect law, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom to the simple, yea, and such wisdom as maketh wise unto salvation;—and what should we desire more?

*Disc.* But could so many thousand divines of former ages be ignorant of this? Have there not so many wars been undertaken for this cause? Could those learned men suffer so many thousands of men to run headlong, both by doing and suffering, into the hazard of soul and body for religion's sake? and so many unspeakable mischiefs to arise, when it is possible for a man to be saved without the controversies of religion? But if this be the command of God, under pain of temporal and everlasting punishment, to fight for those controversies, how can we excuse those shuffling arguments of faith, religion, and God's worship?—A servant may not abate any thing of his Lord's due.

*Consid.* Be ignorant of this!—Of what That controversies are not necessary to salvation; how doth it appear they deserved any such censure? but let us not please ourselves in confusion of things that deserve to be distinguished: a man, yea, a whole nation, may live in peace without war; but, if they are

suffer



suffered to live in peace, but some enemy or other invades them, as Aram before, and the Philistines behind, ready to devour us with open mouth, shall we sit still with our hands in our bosom, till these monsters devour us one after another? as Polyphemus intended to deal with Ulysses and his soldiers, though he shewed him this favour, that he should be the last that should go to pot. This is the condition of God's church, and hath been from the very days of the apostles inclusively, the mysteries of godliness being now revealed in God's word. Many there be that cannot digest these mysteries, and submit unto them by faith; but tho' they embrace the truths of the gospel in some particulars, yet they resist it in others; or, pretending to embrace it, they pervert and wrest it by corrupt interpretation. In this case, are not the orthodox driven to hold their own, and, as St Jude exhorts them, "to contend earnestly for the faith once given to the saints," and to endeavour to kill error, rather than to suffer error to strangle the holy truth of God, to open the truth of God which is according unto godliness; rather to root out weeds, than to suffer them to over-grow the good corn. Thus we are cast upon controversies, whether we will or no; yet this is not a duty that belongs to all, many, yea most, shall be saved without it; like as when an enemy invades us, we gather an army against them, to oppose them and drive them out; the rest pray for their fellow-brethren, but do not fight; yet by this war they may have as great an in-

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terest in the desired peace, as those that fight for it. Thus Chamayar of the French church hath written his *Bella Domini, the Wars of the Lord*, against the Philistines, the antichristian Philistines of the church of Rome; scarce one hath done the like, yet many sons of that honourable church have done valiantly, but Chamayar hath surmounted them all; every one doth not gird himself with the sword upon the thigh at all, but only those who are the Lord's Naunchan, his instructed ones; for those who are overseers and keepers of the tower of David, built for defence, a thousand shields hang therein, and all the targets of the strong men, Cant. iv. 4.—and these are well acquainted with them, and know how to use them, yea, and to handle the sword too as expert in war; and in this holy war they will be content to hazard their life, as St Paul professeth, saying, “And now I go bound to Jerusalem in the Spirit, not knowing what things shall come unto me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every like saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me; but I pass not for these things, neither is my life dear unto me, so I may fulfil my course with joy, and the ministration which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

As for the shuffling arguments here spoken of, when I know them, I shall, upon due consideration, pass my judgment on them as I see cause. A man may sophisticate, I confess, in making arguments; but shuffling courses commonly

monly have place in shifting them off by an undue solution. We know what Paul's course was—he fought with beasts at Ephesus; and Stephen's fortunes too, when certain of the synagogue who were called Libertines and Cyrenians, disputed with Stephen, did not he also dispute with them? The text saith, they were not able to resist the wisdom of the Spirit by which he spake: “If I am offered up,” saith St Paul, “upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoyce therein, and will joy.”

*Disc. Let this thing be considered, seeing it is so intricate, and leads me and many others into disquiet of mind; for which perplexities of conscience, none will deny that a remedy is to be sought at the hands of those that have Christian fellow-feeling, and might be found, if all the divines of those sides that have left Popery, would vouchsafe to afford me a wise, mild, and solid answer in writing, not savouring of partiality, prejudice, or passion.*

*Confid.* When Bosse was taken by the States, there was seen in the wall a bishop sometimes of that town, painted with Christ and his blood on the one side, and the Virgin Mary and her breasts sprouting milk on the other side; and the devout bishop was represented there in the gesture of a man in great perplexity and ambiguity, not knowing well which to prefer, whether Christ's blood before Mary's milk, or Mary's milk before Christ's blood, and this expressed in Latin verses; and one of the Martialists, as it were to put him out of his mood and perplexity, said, *Why thou sot get thee to Gott.* Who, I pray, was the cause  
of



of this man's perplexity? was it not his own extreme superstition most abominable? If the author of this discourse had proposed any thing on the other side to the Scripture, and pretended ambiguity and perplexity, which of them he preferred according whereunto to order his faith, that Martialist's resolution of the doubt might have been congruous enough: but only concerning the Scripture-doubts are here proposed, how a man should ground his faith thereupon; what he is, I know not; and whether this be *res gesta*, or *fieta*, a thing real or counterfeit, I am to seek, for the present world is full of juggling. But when we make such doubts unto ourselves, do we well consider the goodness and wisdom of God, in giving us his holy word to direct us in the ways of everlasting life? if still there were just cause to complain of a perplexed condition, whereinto we were cast, not knowing whether we shall take hold of it, or run away from it, as Moses did from his rod when it was turned into a serpent. But do we find any the like metamorphosis here? yet when the Lord bid Moses take the serpent by the tail, he was bold to do it; surely God's word is no serpent, but we rather, and his word alone hath power to charm us, and make us vomit all our poison of erroneous and unholy ways; and the Lord Christ hath bid us to take hold of them, saying, *Search the Scriptures*; yet if any thing in this my answer seem amiss, and not answerable to the author's expectation, but favouring (as he thinks) of partiality, prejudice, or passion

passion, I confess prejudice against such discourses as these, accounting them most vile, and nothing becoming an understanding and godly Christian; but as for the rest, let him impute it to my ignorance, who know not so much as what is the way of his passion, for he seems to me to be neither Lutheran nor Calvinist, and would not seem to be a Papist, though I am most prone to conceive it to be the trick of some Papist; least of all do I know his person or country.

But let every sober Christian consider well, and inquire, whether that since the beginning that God's word was committed to writing, there were at any time any such questions moved until this last and worst age of the world, when Cardinal Cajetan, a great school-divine, first encountered with Martin Luther, and found that no authority prevailed with him but Scriptural; hereupon he was moved to study Scripture, and wrote commentaries upon it in his old age. But Silvester Prierius of Rome thought that way too far about, and therefore took a shorter course, and maintained that the Scriptures contained not all things necessary to salvation, and therefore the rule of faith, to be made compleat, must be pieced up with the unwritten word, added to the written word; which unwritten word they called traditions. Since that, the Papists have strengthened themselves with the authority of the church, yet confess the true church cannot be known to be a true church, nor the authority thereof known, but by the Scriptures.

tures, and the issue of the resolution of the church must be the resolution of the Pope, concerning the true interpretation of Scripture; shamefully obtruding upon us, that we make the resolution of our faith into our own private spirit; whereas we, to the contrary, extend the testimony of the spirit only to each man's best satisfaction, and teach no other herein than the Papists themselves acknowledge to be most true, as touching the resolution physical of our faith,—as I am able to prove by variety of pregnant evidences, ready at hand, without any more ado than the bare transcribing of them. Now this light being not of a nature communicable unto others, we meddle not with it in disputing upon any other point of divinity with Papists, or any other; but therein walk in all our disputations by way of resolution logical, either into some confessed principles as concerning the attributes divine, or into express passages of holy Scripture; the meaning whereof, if it be excepted against, we are ready to justify by rational discourse against any adversary, nothing doubting but we shall either convict him of obstinacy, in shutting his eyes against the clear evidence of truth, and make him condemned in his own conscience, or at least in the conscience of all sober Christians; being well assured, that whosoever resisteth the evidence of God's word upon pretence of inevidence, that word shall be found of evidence enough to judge him at the last day.





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